



To: House Committee on Education

From: Travis Lowe

Date: February 26, 2025

Re: Support of SB 45

Madam Chair and members of the committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to speak in support of SB 45. I am Travis Lowe, representing Stride, Inc. Stride provides virtual learning programming for the Insight School of Kansas and Kansas Virtual Academy, both hosted as part of the Spring Hill School District.

I am presenting this testimony on behalf of Cassandra Barton, Insight School of Kansas Head of School, who is not available to attend today. Ms. Barton presented this testimony to the Senate Committee on Education.

We are thankful for this committee taking the time to discuss options to help virtual schools and the districts that authorize them continue to be accredited and support not only students in their physical boundaries, but students across the state.

Insight School of Kansas is one of 58 virtual schools or programs in the state which serve high school grade levels, 38 of which serve students outside of their district boundaries. Currently at Insight, we have high school students from approximately 150 districts of residence other than the Spring Hill School District.

We want to begin by thanking you for the Legislature's passage of the virtual school graduation rate bill during the 2022 legislative session. Originating in HB 2602, the new law helps to more accurately portray our virtual school graduation rate performance with the students we serve. Prior to the 2022 law, we were penalized for students who came to us credit deficient and did not graduate on time. As an example, about 40% of our 2024 non-graduates came to Insight credit deficient. We appreciate the Legislature working to improve our performance transparency.

With that in mind, SB 45 provides further transparency into our graduation rate performance. Under the current system, Kansas virtual schools are currently penalized when students transfer to homeschooling or nonaccredited private schools, as these students are still counted in the four-year adjusted cohort graduation rate.

SB 45 would exclude such students from the calculation, similar if a student leaves one brick and mortar school to another.

Looking at our 2024 non-graduates, we have an example of a student whose family chose to withdraw at the close of the student's freshman year from Insight School so he could attend a private, non-accredited religious school in Kansas. In addition, we had five of our other non-graduates whose families chose to leave Insight School and have their students finish high school via homeschool. Of those five students, three were with Insight for less than a school year and none of them were enrolled at Insight in their senior year.

Insight's official 2024 graduation rate is 71.2%. We have seen our graduation rate increase every year since 2017. Had the six students of the class of 2024 who left Insight for homeschool or non-accredited private school not been included, our graduation rate would have been 73.80%.

We believe SB 45 aims to provide a more accurate representation of virtual school performance and prevent undue penalties that could impact their accreditation status.

Understanding that graduation rates play a major role in our virtual school's accreditation, we ask for your support to ensure we can be fairly assessed and remain an option for students who choose our virtual format.

Thank you for the opportunity to offer our thoughts and we ask for your support of SB 45.