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The proposed bill, SB 145, would remove student enrollment as the determining factor in establishing a school's classification and would result in an ever changing and unfair criteria in the future. SB 145 would require the Kansas State High School Activities Association (KSHSAA) to increase its regulatory role by creating a new system of classification. This body and the people of Kansas have no way of knowing what this potential system would be. Be careful when someone is asking for carte blanche with no details on what they will do with it.

Proponents of this bill will claim it solves a competitive imbalance in athletics with private schools. They will cite percentages of private schools playing in championship games or winning championships as proof that there is an unfair advantage, inferring incorrectly that it must be recruiting. This is an oversimplification. It's seen in many other fields, an oversimplification is used to blame and attack something that someone does not like. A good analogy would be in the field of retail. It's like a business that blames its falling profits on its competitor's prices being too low and asking a governing body to penalize the competitor. In this case, it's going so far as to ask for the power to even decide the penalty themselves!

There are so many other factors that play into a school's athletic success such as a community's culture and history, socioeconomic status, and urban/rural location. If the proponents' data took into account these variables, they would quickly see that recruiting does not account for it. There are many public school systems that consistently and routinely have success in athletics. The reasons why are the same reasons why some private schools consistently and routinely have success.

The motive to give KSHSAA the power to create any system it wants is simple - punish private schools for perceived selective enrollment. "Selective enrollment" is a deceiving term that is meant to play on stereotypes that private schools only serve ultra-rich elites or lure and bankroll athletically gifted poor students.

I work at a Catholic school. Catholic schools represent the largest number of private schools in the state. I can unequivocally prove with enrollment data that our families represent a wide variety of income levels, minority groups, students with disabilities, and faith traditions. There are numerous recent examples of public school districts being more selective in their acceptance of transfers due in large part to the funding mechanism that no longer pays on a per student basis.

Catholic schools support and take seriously rules prohibiting athletic recruiting. Those rules are in place and should continue to be enforced. If anything, their enforcement should be ramped up. I wonder if the impetus behind this bill doesn't stem more from intraleague rivalry and accusations than a sense of fairness. There's no need for the entire state to be drawn into these issues.

Please keep those four words in our statutes by killing this bill that would needlessly add regulation and punitive measures for dubious and insular motives.