

House K-12 Education Budget Committee
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Senate Bill 387 - Clarifying nonresident student continued enrollment in out of district schools

Proponent
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Chairwoman Williams and Members of the House K-12 Education Budget Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony in support of SB 387 today. This bill is important not only to my family, but dozens more families in our school system and probably hundreds, if not thousands of families across this beautiful and diverse state. Watching bills progress through the legislative process the past several years, I realize how difficult of a job you have; listening to the many people, perspectives and opinions. I'm not an attorney, lobbyist or politician, I'm simply a concerned parent coming to you today to ask for help.

I have three children in the USD 115 Nemaha Central School system. My high school juniors, Lane and Maddy attended pre-school in our home community school Bern in 2012. That year USD 113 closed the Bern School and they've attended Nemaha Central since 2013, their kindergarten year. While I'm a big proponent of open enrollment and appreciate the clarification to the process the current law gives, it does create a situation where there is no guarantee that my twins will be able to graduate from their school in the 2024-2025 school year.

USD 115 Nemaha Central has seen continual student enrollment growth and is currently operating at capacity. Operating at capacity will trigger the lottery process for non-resident students, like the nearly one hundred Bern area students. Without provisions in the current law to protect or "grandfather" in students, the possibility exists that Lane or Maddy would not be drawn and may again be displaced from a school system, to complete their senior year at another school, farther away from home. Having twins in the same grade, it is not unreasonable to think that one could be drawn and another not, being dispersed across two school systems.

My belief is that this was not the intent of the original open enrollment bill and I appreciate the clarifying language provided in SB 387. Amendments made to this bill in the Senate Education committee don't directly affect my family and I'm neutral on what those mean to the bill overall. My primary concern is the grandfathering in of non-resident students in good standing.

I'd be remiss not to mention that the situation my family and others from the Bern community find ourselves in as "non-residents" is due to the closure of the school in our rural community. If more reasonable provisions were put into place to address the redistribution of territory and out-migration of students following school closures, our families would be active, contributing, represented parts of our school system at NC and open enrollment would be a non-issue for us.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify. I will stand for questions at the appropriate time.