



MISSOURI HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
WITNESS APPEARANCE FORM

BILL NUMBER: HB 543		DATE: 2/9/2021	
COMMITTEE: Elementary and Secondary Education			
TESTIFYING: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> IN SUPPORT OF <input type="checkbox"/> IN OPPOSITION TO <input type="checkbox"/> FOR INFORMATIONAL PURPOSES			
WITNESS NAME			
REGISTERED LOBBYIST:			
WITNESS NAME: AARON BAKER		PHONE NUMBER: 660-281-7777	
REPRESENTING: AMERICAN FEDERATION FOR CHILDREN		TITLE:	
ADDRESS: 18192 OLD HIGHWAY 63			
CITY: ATLANTA		STATE: MO	ZIP: 63530
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE:	SUBMIT DATE: 2/9/2021 12:00 AM	
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WITNESS NAME			
REGISTERED LOBBYIST:			
WITNESS NAME: GARRETT WEBB		PHONE NUMBER: 219-229-1104	
REPRESENTING: ALIGNED		TITLE:	
ADDRESS: 710-A SOULARD BOULEVARD			
CITY: ST. LOUIS		STATE: MO	ZIP: 63104
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE:	SUBMIT DATE: 2/9/2021 12:00 AM	
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WITNESS NAME		
INDIVIDUAL:		
WITNESS NAME: LINDI WILLIFORD		PHONE NUMBER:
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:
ADDRESS:		
CITY:		STATE: ZIP:
EMAIL: lindishae@gmail.com	ATTENDANCE: Written	SUBMIT DATE: 2/8/2021 11:58 AM
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I support HB543. I am a mother of 3 in the Wentzville School District. They have repeatedly failed to provide appropriate education for my children. Our neighboring district, Fort Zumwalt and Francis Howell have done an amazing job at keeping their children in school full-time with face to face learning. If given the opportunity, a transfer would give my children the education they are not receiving in my current district.



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WITNESS NAME		
REGISTERED LOBBYIST:		
WITNESS NAME: STACEY PREIS		PHONE NUMBER: 5738642817
REPRESENTING: ALIGNED		TITLE: CONSULTANT
ADDRESS: 1436 COACHLAMP CT		
CITY: COLUMBIA		STATE: MO
		ZIP: 65203
EMAIL: stacey@preisconsulting.com	ATTENDANCE: Written	SUBMIT DATE: 2/8/2021 10:09 PM

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Aligned is a nonprofit, nonpartisan coalition of business leaders committed to improving education in Missouri. Aligned supports HB 543 for providing opportunities that expand students' options for access to a high-quality education that meets their individual needs. The criteria for local policy development, responsibilities of districts and applicants, and the application process are covered thoroughly. With an issue as complex as open enrollment, there are a number of details to cover. We have a few questions around funding—specifically the application of local revenue and transportation—and we would like to work with the sponsor on clarifying some of the finer points. On the whole, we support HB 543 for its focus on students and creating new flexibilities and opportunities.



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WITNESS NAME		
INDIVIDUAL:		
WITNESS NAME: ARNIE "HONEST-ABE" DIENOFF-STATE PUBLIC ADVOCATE		PHONE NUMBER:
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:
ADDRESS:		
CITY:		STATE: ZIP:
EMAIL: ArnieDienoff@Yahoo.Com	ATTENDANCE: Written	SUBMIT DATE: 2/9/2021 10:36 AM
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I am in Opposition to this Bill.I believe in Neighborhood and Community Schools!This is a burden to the Transferring School District and can be abused for Sports Recruiting PurposesThis is financial burden and unfair to the Home School District



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WITNESS NAME		
INDIVIDUAL:		
WITNESS NAME: CLIFFORD WAYNE STEWART, JR.		PHONE NUMBER:
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:
ADDRESS:		
CITY:		STATE: ZIP:
EMAIL: wstewart@glenwood.k12.mo.us	ATTENDANCE: In-Person	SUBMIT DATE: 2/5/2021 3:07 PM
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I intend to reflect upon the unintended consequences of this proposed legislation on small rural conservatively funded schools such as the one where I have been Superintendent for the past 12 years.



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WITNESS NAME			
INDIVIDUAL:			
WITNESS NAME: DR. CHRIS FORD		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL: chrisford@fordlandschools.org	ATTENDANCE: Written	SUBMIT DATE: 2/8/2021 4:14 PM	

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February 8, 2021 To whom it may concern: My name is Dr. Chris Ford, Superintendent of Schools of the Fordland R-3 School District. This is my seventh year to partner with the community of Fordland and I am writing in opposition to the open enrollment bills HB303 and HB543. I wish I could be present today to show the devastating effects that both of the bills would have on the children and community of the Fordland School District. The Fordland School District is located east of the Springfield, Missouri Metro area. The school district consists mostly of rural farmland and very little industry within our district borders. The Fordland District relies heavily on local, state and federal support, which is driven by our student ADA. The district currently has 585 PK-12 students enrolled and has a free/reduced lunch percentage of 50%. I want to give the educational committee a snap-shot of what the Fordland School District has accomplished over the past several years and how we are working within the district to provide an equitable education to all students. The Fordland School District has been recognized five out of the last six years as a top school according to the News and World Report Best High Schools report. In 2017 and 2020, Fordland High School was recognized as the top high school in Southwest Missouri. The Fordland School District has had numerous state and national recognitions over the past seven years and has been featured in articles by the Future Ready Schools, District Administrator and Education Week. Even with these great student accomplishments, the Fordland District is constantly worried about providing educational opportunities for our students with the local, state and federal funding that is provided. One of the biggest district-level gaps in the Fordland School District is the socioeconomic level of our student population. The Fordland School District has strategically over the past seven years worked diligently to provide equitable educational opportunities for our students. There are three areas in which the Fordland District has made a strategic and purposeful plan to fight the issue of the socioeconomic gap, which is inherent to small rural schools. First, the Fordland District partnered the Care to Learn network to battle the health, hygiene, and hunger needs of our students. The needs of our students can be met quickly and confidentially to ensure unmet health, hunger, and hygiene needs do not stand in the way of student success. Secondly, the Fordland Schools has sponsored and actively partnered with the youth sports program to ensure all students have the opportunity to participate in youth activities regardless of their socioeconomic status. Finally, is the success of our students in the AP and Dual Credit programs at the high school level. Though our District has a free and reduced lunch population of approximately 50%, and many of the parents of our students did not attend college or even graduate high school, we believed we were fortunate to have a community that would strive to improve the futures of their children given the opportunity. In 2012, the high school implemented the AP program in the English and social studies departments and two dual credit classes. In the fall of 2015, the District became alarmed with the decline of students attending a two and four-year post-secondary institutions. After collaborating with our stakeholders throughout the district, it was determined that money and lack of choice was a

roadblock for students to be involved in the AP and dual-credit classes. The District implemented a program that allowed all students to take dual-credit classes and the AP test at the district's expense. Since 2015, the high school has implemented two more AP courses, seven dual-credit courses, and are planning to add more in the future. 2014/2015 AP & Dual Credit Courses:-OTC Career Center-Computer Applications- OTC Articulated Credit-Human Communications-Speech-AP World History-AP English Language & Composition 2019/2020 AP & Dual Credit Courses:-OTC Career Center-Computer Applications- OTC Articulated Credit-Human Communications-Speech-Leadership-Calculus-Pre Calculus I-Pre Calculus II-Algebraic Reasoning-Psychology-Sociology-AP World History-AP English Language & Composition-AP Biology-AP Computer Science Principles Our students believe that they can achieve anywhere and anything because they see themselves succeeding on tests taken by the best and brightest. They compete for and receive scholarships and admission to schools (Baylor, Vanderbilt) they never would have considered before. Nearly half of a class may be enrolled in AP (US News Best Schools), and well above the global averages pass the exams (see below). Our community has become an academic powerhouse because the students and parents believe in themselves and the school.

District AP Exam Annual Pass Rate (2014-2018)		Subject		2014	2015	2016
2017	2018	English	57%	81%	50%	88%
27%	73%		82%	56%	67%	78%
		History	100%	100%		
		Biology:				
		Computer Science:				
(implemented 2019-2020)						
Fordland High School 2-year and 4-year College Entrance Rate:Year				Students		
4 Year	2 Year	Total	2018	2017	2016	2015
16.2%	51.4%	67.6%	37	34	37	34
	20.6%	41.2%	61.8%	2016	56.8%	2015
37	18.9%	37.8%	45.2%	2014	16.2%	
	42	21.4%	45	15.6%	15.7%	
66.7%	37	21.6%	51			
42.2%	37.8%	15.6%	54.9%			
	39.2%	54.9%				

Most importantly, the educators in the District strive to enable students to achieve more than they ever thought possible as they recognized that they are not defined by the size of their town or the money in their bank account, but by the effort they put into their own success. The question now arises that if HB303 and HB543 successfully passes, what impact would these harmful bills have on the students of the Fordland School District? The open enrollment process would allow students from the Fordland District to enroll in a nonresident district. According to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, nonresident students must be counted as the nonresident districts students for state aid purposes. The loss of students, especially in smaller rural districts, to open enrollment would financially destroy the school and community. If the Fordland School District lost 40 students to neighboring school districts, this would impact so many areas of finance. Just off of the basic funding formula, 40 students would equal over \$ 250,000 in lost basic formula dollars. This figure doesn't even take into account the effects that this would have on the state funding formula including our special education and free and reduced lunch count. The timeline that is proposed in HB303 and HB543 would also be a financial planning nightmare! This would require the Fordland School District to hold a greater percentage in reserves to offset swings in school population. This could cause teachers salaries to become more stagnant and force less equitable educational experiences for ALL students. The Fordland District was in financial peril when I took the reigns of the district in 2014. Below is our fund balances over the past several years:

Year	Percentage	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
	38.50%	33.30%	20.80%	14.30%	14.00%						
	33.50%	8.30%	7.34%	10.13%	12.90%						

During this financially stressful time, the Fordland District has had to cut 24 certified and non-certified positions since 2014. Only recently, the district has been able to add positions back due to an increase in student ADA. I can only imagine that the loss of ADA due to open enrollment would be commonplace among small rural districts. How many local jobs will need to be cut due to open enrollment? How many communities would be financially devastated due the loss of jobs or even consolidation with a larger school district? What type of equitable education would the Fordland District be able to provide to the children of the school district? I know that the House Elementary and Secondary Education Committee values Missouri's biggest asset, the students of Missouri! I truly believe that this piece of legislation has many unattended consequences. For the Fordland School District to continue to provide an equitable education to the students of this community, I encourage a no vote of HB303 and HB543. Thank you for your time and your service to the State of Missouri.

Respectfully,
 Fordland R-3 School District
 Dr. Chris Ford
 Superintendent of Schools



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WITNESS NAME		
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION:		
WITNESS NAME: DR. DANIEL CLEMENS		PHONE NUMBER: 816-321-5000
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME: NORTH KANSAS CITY SCHOOLS		TITLE: SUPERINTENDENT
ADDRESS: 2000 NORTHEAST 46TH STREET		
CITY: KANSAS CITY		STATE: MO
		ZIP: 64116
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE:	SUBMIT DATE: 2/9/2021 12:00 AM
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WITNESS NAME		
INDIVIDUAL:		
WITNESS NAME: JEANNIE JENKINS		PHONE NUMBER:
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:
ADDRESS:		
CITY:		STATE: ZIP:
EMAIL: jjenkins@springbluffpirates.com	ATTENDANCE: Written	SUBMIT DATE: 2/8/2021 4:09 PM
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As a K8 Superintendent, I oppose HB 543. This bill will cause school consolidation due to the financial hardship it will impose on districts of all sizes. The loss of local taxpayer dollars to other districts is unacceptable. Our taxpayers have supported our district based on our needs and fully expect their hard earned money to be used for those purposes. Local taxpayers expect their tax dollars to be used for the the intent they were collected and not redistributed to fund a 'tuition pool' for students across the state. Open enrollment will not benefit the majority, only the few who have a means of alternate transportation. Realistically, most families are not going to be able to transport students to a district in which they do not reside. If we are truly wanting to provide students with options, the focus should be on improving the schools where they reside, building strong communities in which these students will continue to support as adults. Meeting the needs of our most vulnerable population is not fully addressed in this bill either. Our special needs students need to have the same access to the options a typical peer has. Again, the focus should be on supporting and improving our schools and all populations rather than tearing them apart. Budgeting will be even more challenging with so many variables-too many staff one year, not enough the next. Simply put open enrollment will not serve the unadvantage but will leave them further behind. The focus needs to turn to supporting and buiding stronger schools in each of our communities. Each community is unique and to say that open enrollment would benefit all students is misleading and grossly misunderstood. However, the impact will be felt by all due to the financial hardship it will cause for districts.



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WITNESS NAME			
INDIVIDUAL:			
WITNESS NAME: KEN ENLOE		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE:	SUBMIT DATE: 2/9/2021 12:00 AM	
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WITNESS NAME			
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION:			
WITNESS NAME: KYLE KRUSE		PHONE NUMBER: 636-629-3500	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME: ST. CLAIR R-XIII SCHOOL DISTRICT		TITLE: SUPERINTENDENT	
ADDRESS: 905 BERDOT			
CITY: ST. CLAIR		STATE: MO	ZIP: 63077
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE:	SUBMIT DATE: 2/9/2021 12:00 AM	
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WITNESS NAME			
REGISTERED LOBBYIST:			
WITNESS NAME: MATT MICHELSON		PHONE NUMBER: 573-680-6188	
REPRESENTING: MISSOURI STATE TEACHERS ASSOCIATION		TITLE:	
ADDRESS: 407 SOUTH 6TH STREET			
CITY: COLUMBIA		STATE: MO	ZIP: 65205
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE:	SUBMIT DATE: 2/9/2021 12:00 AM	
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WITNESS NAME		
REGISTERED LOBBYIST:		
WITNESS NAME: OTTO FAJEN		PHONE NUMBER: 573-634-3202
REPRESENTING: MISSOURI NEA		TITLE: LEGISLATIVE DIRECTOR
ADDRESS: 1810 EAST ELM STREET		
CITY: JEFFERSON CITY		STATE: MO
		ZIP: 65101
EMAIL: otto.fajen@mnea.org	ATTENDANCE: Written	SUBMIT DATE: 2/8/2021 9:00 PM

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Missouri NEA Testimony on HB 543 to the House Elementary and Secondary Education Committee February 9, 2021
Otto Fajen, MNEA Legislative Director
The Association appreciates the opportunity to present written testimony regarding HB 543 filed by Rep. Pollitt. The bill would allow students to request a transfer to attend another public school district. The Association opposes the bill as filed. School districts would have the option to specify the number of transfer students they are willing to receive, but there would be no general limitation on the number of students who chose to leave the district. HB 543 includes the option for a district to adopt a diversity plan that could limit student transfers out of the district for transfers that would work against the diversity plan. The bill contains complex funding provisions for transferring funds from the sending district to the receiving district. The Association is concerned that many students may be left behind in such a transfer plan. Usually, the students with means and parental and family support will be the most likely to take advantage of such an option. The bill would offer transportation reimbursement for low-income families, but many will not have available transportation or the time to transport their student. Those likely to be left behind are the neediest, most at-risk and those most in need of special support services. Because Missouri relies heavily on local funding for public schools, issues will inevitably arise regarding equitable access to at-risk students, childcare, health problems, transportation, student athletics and activities recruitment, low incidence special education needs and other factors. The Association is also concerned that, as has been observed in other states with open enrollment policies, the bill will tend to further segregate students across the state by income and race. The Association believes that public institutions and policies should play a positive role in integration in schools and in society. On behalf of the Association, I thank you for the opportunity to offer our testimony on this bill.
Otto Fajen
MNEA Legislative Director



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WITNESS NAME			
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION:			
WITNESS NAME: ROGER SCHMITZ		PHONE NUMBER: 816-580-7277	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME: LAWSON R-XIV SCHOOLS		TITLE: SUPERINTENDENT	
ADDRESS: 401 NORTH ALLISON STREET			
CITY: LAWSON		STATE: MO	ZIP: 64062
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE:	SUBMIT DATE: 2/9/2021 12:00 AM	
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WITNESS NAME			
REGISTERED LOBBYIST:			
WITNESS NAME: RON BERRY		PHONE NUMBER: 660-537-2239	
REPRESENTING: AMERICAN FEDERATION OF TEACHERS MISSOURI		TITLE:	
ADDRESS: P.O. BOX 722			
CITY: JEFFERSON CITY		STATE: MO	ZIP: 65102
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE:	SUBMIT DATE: 2/9/2021 12:00 AM	
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WITNESS NAME			
REGISTERED LOBBYIST:			
WITNESS NAME: SCOTT KIMBLE		PHONE NUMBER:	
REPRESENTING: MISSOURI ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS		TITLE:	
ADDRESS: 3550 AMAZONAS DRIVE			
CITY: JEFFERSON CITY		STATE: MO	ZIP: 65109
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE:	SUBMIT DATE: 2/9/2021 12:00 AM	
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WITNESS NAME			
REGISTERED LOBBYIST:			
WITNESS NAME: STEVE CARROLL		PHONE NUMBER: 573-751-5952	
REPRESENTING: NORTH KANSAS CITY & ST. LOUIS PUBLIC SCHOOLS		TITLE:	
ADDRESS: 215 EAST CAPITOL AVENUE			
CITY: JEFFERSON CITY		STATE: MO	ZIP: 65101
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE:	SUBMIT DATE: 2/9/2021 12:00 AM	
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WITNESS NAME			
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION:			
WITNESS NAME: TONYA WOODS		PHONE NUMBER: 417-264-4600	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME: THAYER R-II SCHOOL DISTRICT		TITLE: SUPERINTENDENT	
ADDRESS: 401 EAST WALNUT STREET			
CITY: THAYER		STATE: MO	ZIP: 65791
EMAIL: twoods@thayer.k12.mo.us	ATTENDANCE: Written	SUBMIT DATE: 2/8/2021 11:27 PM	

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Thayer R-II is a school district located a mile from the Arkansas Stateline and because of location I have witnessed firsthand the discrepancies that open enrollment brings to a state. I have seen the Arkansas schools get into the business of marketing their school districts and trying to recruit the best athletes and academic students they can get. I hope this does not become a reality in our state. In HB 543 and HB 303 it is mentioned: 1) the school may establish standards for transfer applications. 2) Students who wish to attend nonresident schools that have an academic or competitive entrance process shall furnish proof that they meet the admission requirements. Does this mean the school district can pick and choose what type of student we want to accept? The word of the year in education has been equality. Public schools being able to set standards for selecting which Missouri students we want in our halls seems like anything but equality? Thayer R-II School District has experienced a lot of academic success the past six years. Speaking only of last year, we had two National Merit finalist and one National Merit recipient in a class of less than fifty students. We have received first or second in state quiz bowl for the past four years. We scored 100% on our state APR in 2018. We have had tremendous success in girls' and boys' athletics. Winning the girls state basketball championship in 2019 and making a run at the state football playoffs six out of the last seven years. We also have an outstanding special education department. Our culture of pride and success is something we have worked hard to create. I say all of this to point out that we would be a school that could financial prosper under open enrollment, but it would be at the expense of the schools and communities surrounding us. Not something I would want associated with our school districts reputation. The craziness of high school athletics would only be intensified with open enrollment. We only have to look at private schools in the state to see what recruitment of athletes can do. HB 543 articulates: Students that participate in open enrollment in high school may not participate in varsity sports during the first 90 days of enrollment in a non-resident district... So, a student enrolls at the beginning of the school year, they would be ineligible for fall sports, football and volleyball, but would become eligible for basketball and spring sports? What is the thought behind this? Why 90 days? Why not a year? With the addition of so many students on virtual school this year, keeping up with where your students are living has become a major job. Our district has experienced families being more transit this year than in previous years. With me, the resident school being responsible for paying the virtual tuition of my students, I am going to make sure they are living in my district before paying. This has become a nightmare to keep up with because parents are not truthful about where they are living or where they have moved to while the child is participating virtually. There is no accountability of their location. Going to the house and doing a house check is the only way to truly have an answer. The same will be true with your resident child attending a non-resident school. The resident school will have to do house checks to see if the family is still living in district, otherwise the

resident school will be paying for a student who has moved. The transfers of money will be an issue. The transfer of monies has already proven to be an issue with foster care students residing in non-resident districts. Transportation reimbursement for students that qualify for free and reduced meals? Where is this new money going to come from? Currently, our district receives less than 20% state reimbursement of total transportation expenses for a year. Our free and reduced population runs around 60% every year, doesn't match up. A 2018 study, conducted in the state of Colorado states that roughly 16% of all students in the state used the school choice option to attend their non-resident school. The family statistics of the 16% who chose school choice are more than likely to be white and in the middle or upper socioeconomic class. Transportation is a major barrier for school choice options for lower-income families who can't afford the time and cost of transporting students. Harper, A. (2018, December 13). Transportation, enrollment issues create barriers to school choice, study says. K-12 Dive.com It is statistically proven that children fall behind three-quarters of a grade level when they change schools because socially, they are the outsiders moving in, they do not know the culture nor dynamics of the school, and an adjustment period has to occur. "Children who switch schools after the eighth grade tend to have lower engagement, poorer grades in reading and math, and a higher risk of dropping out of high school all together." Krisch, J.A.(2018, June 27). Data Shows why Your Kid Probably Shouldn't Switch Schools. www.Fatherly.com I have tried to address issues that others might not put at the forefront of open enrollment, but that I find near and dear to my rural part of Missouri. Thank you for your time and consideration.



MISSOURI HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
WITNESS APPEARANCE FORM

BILL NUMBER: HB 543		DATE: 2/9/2021	
COMMITTEE: Elementary and Secondary Education			
TESTIFYING: <input type="checkbox"/> IN SUPPORT OF <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> IN OPPOSITION TO <input type="checkbox"/> FOR INFORMATIONAL PURPOSES			
WITNESS NAME			
REGISTERED LOBBYIST:			
WITNESS NAME: WILLIAM GAMBLE		PHONE NUMBER: 573-634-4876	
REPRESENTING: SPECIAL SCHOOL DISTRICT OF ST. LOUIS COUNTY		TITLE:	
ADDRESS: 12110 CLAYTON ROAD			
CITY: ST. LOUIS		STATE: MO	ZIP: 63131
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE:	SUBMIT DATE: 2/9/2021 12:00 AM	
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MISSOURI HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
WITNESS APPEARANCE FORM

BILL NUMBER: HB 543		DATE: 2/9/2021	
COMMITTEE: Elementary and Secondary Education			
TESTIFYING: <input type="checkbox"/> IN SUPPORT OF <input type="checkbox"/> IN OPPOSITION TO <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> FOR INFORMATIONAL PURPOSES			
WITNESS NAME			
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION:			
WITNESS NAME: BRITTANY WHITLEY		PHONE NUMBER: 573-340-5738	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME: MISSOURI SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY (MOST) POLICY INITIATIVE		TITLE: EDUCATION & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT POLICY FELLOW	
ADDRESS: 238 E. HIGH ST.			
CITY: JEFFERSON CITY		STATE: MO	ZIP: 65101
EMAIL: brittany@mostpolicyinitiative.org	ATTENDANCE: Written	SUBMIT DATE: 2/8/2021 1:47 PM	
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For PDF, please visit: https://mostpolicyinitiative.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/ScienceNote_InterdistrictOpenEnrollment.pdf Executive Summary Interdistrict choice allows students to attend a public school outside of their resident district. Mandatory open enrollment policies require districts to accept transfer students, although schools are often allowed to set their own enrollment limits and have some flexibility to choose which students are accepted. When not associated with an intentional desegregation program, open enrollment policies in nearby states have been associated with increased school segregation by both race and income. The most equitable and successful interdistrict choice systems provide stable state support for tuition and transportation costs, as well as specific enrollment criteria to ensure that all students can access better school options. Highlights • In the absence of specific criteria for interdistrict transfer, schools with high local property wealth and/or schools adjacent to predominantly nonwhite neighborhoods sometimes create barriers to enrollment that effectively limit choices for many students in underperforming schools and exacerbate school segregation. • In states that rely heavily on local funding for public education (e.g., Missouri), resident districts are responsible for paying higher tuition costs for students who transfer to other schools. For schools in regions with low local property wealth, these transfer costs can reduce school revenue significantly and limit their ability to improve school quality. • Most states with open enrollment programs do not subsidize transportation, which can make it difficult for some poor and working families to access the full range of choices. Limitations • Because state and county open enrollment characteristics vary widely across the country, it is difficult to predict the exact program criteria that would prevent or reduce segregation in Missouri. These criteria may also vary regionally (i.e., rural vs. urban). • There is limited research that directly compares how student performance varies across neighboring districts that either allow for or restrict interdistrict transfers. It is also difficult to directly determine if the academic success of transfer students is caused by the transfer program itself or is reflective of other factors that drive open enrollment participation (e.g., high academic achievement, family involvement, motivation). Research Background Interdistrict enrollment in Missouri Students who are assigned to an unaccredited school or district in Missouri must be allowed to attend an accredited school in the same or adjoining county (Mo. Ann. Stat. § 167.895). Missouri also allows districts to enter into voluntary transfer agreements where students can attend school in a district other than their home district in cases where natural barriers, travel time or distance create an unusual or unreasonable transportation hardship (Mo. Ann. Stat. § 162.1040-162.1059). Under current law, receiving districts can set enrollment caps but cannot deny a transfer request solely for academic, athletic, artistic or extracurricular ability, handicapping conditions, English language proficiency or

most disciplinary records. Voluntary interdistrict transfer in St. Louis intentional desegregation programs can provide equitable education choices for low-income and marginalized students, the majority of whom are African American. In response to a 1972 lawsuit over school segregation in St. Louis, Missouri implemented a desegregation program that is now referred to as “VICC” (the Voluntary Interdistrict Choice Corporation). VICC allows African American students in St. Louis to choose schools within St. Louis County, while encouraging students from St. Louis County to attend magnet schools within St. Louis City. For the first sixteen years, the tuition and transportation costs of the student transfer program were fully covered by the state of Missouri, with participation peaking at around 14,000 students.¹ In addition to the well-established social and economic benefits of diverse schools², there is evidence that transferring into some St. Louis County schools is associated with higher test scores and graduation rates compared to students who remain in St. Louis City.³ However, when the program was removed from federal supervision in 1999, enrollment started decreasing, likely due to insufficient participation of suburban families choosing schools in St. Louis City and the inability of schools in districts with low local property wealth to pay higher tuition rates for transferring students to attend suburban schools (Figure 1).¹ VICC is currently winding down and new interdistrict enrollments will stop after the 2024-25 school year.

How do interdistrict open enrollment policies impact school segregation? Housing policies and school district borders can segregate neighborhoods by race and wealth. As of 2019, there are twenty-four school district borders in Missouri classified as “deeply divisive”—representing at least a 25-percentage point difference in the proportion of nonwhite students and at least a 10 percent difference in the total revenue spent per pupil.⁴ Eleven of these borders are in the St. Louis metro region. In nearby states (e.g., Minnesota, Wisconsin, Michigan, and Ohio), open enrollment policies have often exacerbated segregation (measured by isolation of Black and Latinx students within certain districts and/or the directional flow of students in and out of districts). Additionally, these programs typically provide the fewest choice options to students attending lower quality schools.⁵⁻⁸ White suburban students tend to have the most mobility and are often able to access the best schools.^{5,7,8} High performing schools, especially those directly neighboring predominantly nonwhite school districts, often set restrictive enrollment criteria that make it difficult for students to transfer into them.^{6,7} Rural areas are often open to interdistrict transfers but can face extra transportation challenges due to geography and low population density.^{7,9} Overall, voluntary desegregation programs like VICC provide a model for how strong guidelines and suburban transfer incentives (e.g. financial support, diversity criteria) can be used to improve access to choice and reduce segregation.¹⁰

How does state-level funding affect interdistrict transfer outcomes? A common rationale for expanding interdistrict open enrollment is that, by allowing students to transfer out of low-performing schools, sending schools would be motivated to improve their quality to compete in the education market. In addition to incentivizing equitable transfers, stable state funding is an important tool to ensure that the competition model can function as intended. Missouri’s current funding formula relies significantly on local revenue compared to state and federal dollars.¹¹ When the Normandy public school district became unaccredited, for example, Normandy was responsible for funding the tuition at transfer schools, which sometimes was up to \$20,000 per child.¹² The combination of low local tax revenue and millions of dollars in tuition and transportation costs resulted in significant financial hardship in Normandy and has made it more challenging to improve school quality. Consistently, Normandy continues to have some of the lowest test scores in the state. States with large open enrollment systems (e.g., Minnesota- Minn. Stat. § 126.10, subs. 24 to 30) tend to rely more heavily on state educational support, providing more state funds to regions with higher need in order to attenuate funding disparities, similar to those observed in Missouri.

How do geography and transportation impact interdistrict transfers? Proximity to a school is a significant factor for school choice, especially in low-income families who typically have work and childcare commitments. Only six open enrollment states require that all interdistrict transfer students have access to public school transportation systems, while around 26 states have no provisions to require that public transportation is available free of charge (Figure 2).^{13,14} Transportation is often subsidized as part of desegregation programs (e.g., VICC). Even then, in cases where high performing schools are far from students’ homes, commute time can take up several hours of the day and may limit participation in extracurricular activities. Long school commutes are also associated with increased absenteeism and subsequent transfers to closer schools.¹⁵ Finally, because special education provisions are provided by districts in Missouri, the current model is not set up to handle the specific costs and transportation needs of special education students who choose to move to another district.

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