



Kidder County Public School District#1

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Wednesday, January 25, 2023**Testimony to the House Education Committee Regarding HB 1251****Chair – Representative Pat Heinert**

Good morning Chairman Heinert, Vice-Chair Schrieber-Beck & Members of the Committee, I am Rick Diegel, the Superintendent at the Kidder County School District and the Linton School District. This is my 35th year in education and my 24th year as a Superintendent. ~~I was the superintendent for 16 years in Edgeley, 8 years at Kidder County and this is my first year as a shared superintendent between Kidder County and Linton.~~ I am here today to speak in opposition to HB 1251, which would require schools of less than 475 students to share superintendents.

Since I am currently a shared superintendent of two districts, both with less than 475 students, I believe that I have a unique perspective regarding this bill.

I will begin by saying that in the right situation, I do believe that a shared superintendent is possible, but only if you have the right person and the right school districts. However, it is not an easy thing to do. In my case, the shared superintendency occurred last spring when the Linton School District's superintendent left, and they began looking for a new superintendent. At some point, they approached me and the Kidder County School Board president and asked if we would consider sharing a superintendent. Since I no longer have children at home and have a VERY understanding wife, I considered it. The agreement benefitted me a little financially and it saved each district some money, so we decided to give it a try. The agreement that was made is that I'm in Linton on Monday, Thursday and every other Wednesday and Kidder County on Tuesday, Friday and every other Wednesday.

The savings for each district is approximately \$35,000 - \$45,000, which is a positive, but it isn't as high of a savings as I've heard being discussed. As part of that, both principals and business managers in each district were paid an additional amount.

The distance between Steele and Linton is about 60 miles, which is probably more than it would be for most districts. However, I do not believe that this could be a long-term solution for a more inexperienced superintendent with children at home. Though we have decided to share again next year, I'm not sure how

many more years I can do this. When I travel to Linton, I usually leave about 6:00 AM and return home about 6:00 PM, and days that I have school board meetings I return home about 10:00 PM. I am a believer that the superintendent should be the first person in the building in the morning and the last to leave in the evening. Again, I have a very understanding wife!

I will admit that while I am a shared superintendent, I feel guilty that others are covering duties that I used to do. For example, I used to sub bus drive, coach JH girls' basketball, ref most elementary and junior high basketball games, cover for teachers that are gone, have recess duty, have bus duty every day (I now only have it on the days I'm at the school), etc. Now others are having to cover these duties that I used to be able to do. I also do not have the personal relationships that I used to have with students, and in the case of the Linton School, I feel very guilty that I do not know all the student's names.

I will also add that not everyone in our community is happy about this shared superintendency, regardless of the money savings. I have heard crabbing about sharing, as they want their superintendent in the building when they come in to visit. This is probably more of a Class B thing, but it is a reality in my world. Finally, when our teams play each other, it is not fun for me. Though this may sound crazy, what shirt I wear, where I sit/stand and if I make any supportive gestures for either team will be judged by parents and community members. And if I had a nickel for each time someone asked me who I was cheering for, I could retire tomorrow.

I also want to address the belief that there is some type of an incentive to share superintendents. ~~Last summer, after I informed DPI that I would be shared, I was told that there was an incentive to share superintendents. I said that that is great, I was surprised I hadn't heard of it since I follow the legislative process closely, but that wasn't why we did it, but we'll take the money. When DPI finally sent me the information in HB 1013 from the 2021 session, it stated that you had to share BOTH superintendent and business manager to qualify for 10% of the salary back. In my opinion, though it is possible to share a superintendent in the right situation, I don't believe that it is possible to share a business manager. Business managers do so much financial work on all the grants and such and having to work out of two budgets, I don't think it's possible.~~ I would suggest a 25% payback to districts that choose to share a superintendent OR a business manager, and maybe the incentive would be great enough for districts to voluntarily try it.

In conclusion, though I am currently a shared superintendent, I am a big supporter of local control, and I don't believe that forcing districts to do this, is right thing to do. Though there are some positives to it financially, I don't believe that in most cases they outweigh the negatives.

Thank you and I stand for any questions.