



Webb City School District

411 N. Madison
Webb City, MO 64870
417-673-6000



Joplin Schools

825 S. Pearl Avenue
Joplin, MO 64801
417-625-5200



Southwest Center for
Educational Excellence

528 Ellis Street
Webb City, MO 64870
417-673-7078

April 29, 2024

SOUNDING THE ALARM "SB727"

**To the Honorable Mike Parson
Governor of Missouri**

On behalf of the 41 public school districts that are members of the Southwest Center for Educational Excellence, we request that you VETO SB 727!

What is Senate Bill 727? It is a 167-page education catch-all bill passed by the Missouri Senate and the Missouri House of Representatives and is currently headed to the Governor's desk for his approval. The bill includes an increase of voucher tax credits for private schools and home schools and an expansion of charter schools. It does include one-time increases to local school funding; however, there are no guarantees beyond the next year's budget for continued funding.

This bill will allow for the current voucher tax credit program to leap from \$25 million to \$75 million with no foreseeable cap. It will likely continue to grow indefinitely and redirect needed dollars for public schools. Private school and home school families earning up to \$200,000 annually will be able to apply and receive the full state funding per student of \$6,760 per student. They will receive these dollars with absolutely no accountability for how those dollars are spent, unlike our member public school districts that are required to follow rigorous and expensive federal and state accountability and accreditation requirements. Government-funded school choice using the state's revenue with little or no accountability would be a poor use of our member communities' tax dollars.

Another provision in the bill that seems sensible and necessary is raising the minimum teacher salary in Missouri to \$40,000. However, increasing the minimum salary yearly per the consumer price index (CPI) or inflation does not allow for a guarantee for state funding to follow indefinitely. Our member school districts are in complete agreement with this provision, except for the lack of any guarantees in the bill for required future funding.



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Once this bill is signed into law, it is codified, and all schools must pay those current and future increases indefinitely, regardless of economic conditions or whether the state can meet its obligation to future generations of teachers. If this bill becomes law, our member schools and all public schools in Missouri must commit to future spending at a rate we have no reasonable idea if we can meet. In any year, if the state cannot fund this expensive expectation, schools would need to raise their local taxes or begin to lay off the very teachers this bill was supposed to be helping.

SB 727 has multiple other negatives and a few positives, but given its overall purpose, public dollars should go to public schools. Our member districts are sounding the alarm today about how this bill will negatively impact our local school districts in southwest Missouri and, truthfully, the entire state.

Though there are some palatable parts of SB 727, without future guarantees, this bill is nothing more than the state writing checks in the future that it doesn't know if it will be able to cash. However, our local school districts will be saddled with the tab.

Governor Parson, we respectfully request that you veto SB 727 to save future generations from paying the cost of this bill. Please see the list of signatures from our member districts.

Sincerely,

The Southwest Center for Educational Excellence

**Dr. Melissa Massey
Executive Director**

Webb City School District

**Dr. Anthony Rossetti
Superintendent**

Joplin Schools

**Dr. Kerry Sachetta
Superintendent**