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HOUSE of REPRESENTATIVES

State of Oklahoma

REPRESENTATIVE MELOYDE BLANCETT
OKLAHOMA HOUSE DISTRICT 78

October 22, 2024

The Honorable Senator Roger Thompson
The Honorable Representative Kevin Wallace

Dear Sen. Thompson and Rep. Wallace,

I have been giving a lot of thought to the work that LOFT has been conducting for next week's report and I have concluded that there are at least a couple of serious holes that I feel need to be added to the scope -- even though the report is due next week.

I wanted to ask you about the possibility of adding these items directly out of respect for you as the chairs of the Oversight Committee. There have been at least two other areas of financial concern that have been raised by numerous stakeholders and constituents both publicly and to me privately and I feel I have an obligation to put them forward for official review.

The first is the use of State Department of Education dollars to conduct travel for purposes not related to the operation of the public instruction in Oklahoma, but rather for political purposes. There have been media reports here and there about this topic but I think we have a responsibility to analyze what exactly has been spent in travel and whether or not that complies with state travel policy to put that out in the open once and for all, particularly since we are already digging into other areas of departmental fiscal management.

The second area has to do with an analysis of public dollars used for private school tuition under the new Oklahoma Parental Choice Tax Credit Program. You may have read in media reports that the State Department of Education and I believe the Oklahoma Tax Commission has said they legally do not have to disclose any details with regard to how this money has been used and with what institutions. I believe whether you agree with the program or not, given that this is tax payer dollars, the public does have a right to know where that money is going and how it is being used. This also should be included in the fiscal analysis having to do with the State Department of Education.

I understand the upcoming report is next week, a very short time away. But at least I believe, we should add this to the scope and if needed LOFT can present some preliminary information with the caveat that a follow up, more thorough amended report will be made.

I have had so many constituents and stakeholders ask me about this that I feel it is my duty to directly articulate this request to you both as Chairmen. Thank you for your kind consideration.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, which appears to read "Meloyde Blancett", is written over a printed name.

Representative Meloyde Blancett