

Testimony before the
Senate Select Committee on School Finance

on

SB 44 – School Finance

by

Shellaine Kiblinger, Superintendent, USD 447 – Cherryvale-Thayer Public Schools

Today I'm submitting this testimony on behalf of Cherryvale-Thayer Public Schools

February 6, 2019

Senator Baumgardner and Members of the Committee:

I wish to submit testimony in support of SB 44. I represent the small communities of Cherryvale and Thayer, located in Southeast Kansas. Our district serves 800 students.

Through the crippling budget cuts of the past decade, our students have done without textbook replacements, basic repairs to their school buildings, and lack access to critical social-emotional support systems in an area of our state continually facing teenage suicides.

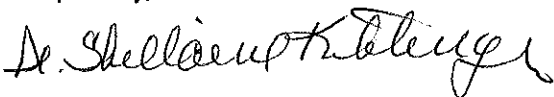
Through the support of our legislators last year, we have finally begun to see positive change for our students. Most significantly, we have begun to offer the services of a master's level social worker to provide much needed social-emotional support and counseling to students in crisis. **We credit her presence and the "suicide response" training she provided our staff with saving the life of a high school student just a few weeks ago.** While this position is still just 10 hours per week, with the funding in SB44, we will expand this to a full-time position serving K-12 students. This type of social-emotional support is desperately needed in our lower grades, and without funding of SB 44, we cannot provide this service.

The funding increases we received last year were primarily used to boost salaries and benefits of staff. The teacher shortage in Kansas is real. We look forward to continuing to increase salary and benefit packages to recruit and retain quality teachers. Funding through SB 44 will help us expand our Career and Technical Education pathways, and a pathway in Education is one we would like to add. This would help grow the pipeline of future teachers in our state.

Lastly, the equalization for our Local Option Budget and Capital Outlay has been greatly appreciated. USD 447 has a very low assessed valuation per student. Without equalization, the mill rate on our LOB would be crippling. Our capital outlay is equalized 78% and even with this state support, we do not have sufficient funds to maintain our buildings. Additional funding from SB 44 will be used for much needed maintenance of our facilities, as the Heating and Cooling Units and Roofs in the majority of our buildings are in need of attention.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony. We support SB 44.

Respectfully,



Dr. Shellaine Kiblinger
Superintendent, Cherryvale-Thayer Public Schools