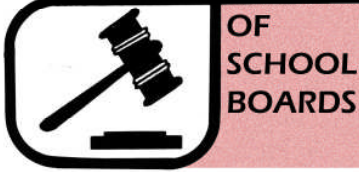


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Testimony before the
House Committee on Education
on
HB 2713 – Virtual Courses for Precollege Curriculum
by
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February 16, 2012

Mr. Chairman, Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on **HB 2713**. As we have done on several other bills, KASB appears as a “reluctant” opponent to this bill. Once again, we understand the motive behind this proposal, but we also see it as imposing new costs on school districts as resources continue to remain static at best. Again, we would like to present some alternative ideas for the committee to consider.

As we reported to you before, over the past 18 months, KASB has worked hard to find out what Kansans believe about improving their public schools. We have previously presented one of the positions our members adopted based on this input in the “First in Education, the Kansas Way” resolution:

- **Broader curriculum.** Maintain the current breadth of courses and activities and expand focus to include college preparation, career education, fine arts and development of essential life skills.

We have shared with you our concern about new state mandates:

- **Local decision-making.** Support local choices in education policy and use of funding unless the school persistently fails to demonstrate improvement.
- **State mandates.** Review and identify state mandates for possible repeal; oppose new requirements without clear evidence of effectiveness and funding for additional costs.

HB 2713 is clearly a new state mandate. Districts would be required to pay for any course offered by any public school virtual program that met any requirement of the Kansas Board of Regents pre-college curriculum. KASB supports increasing the range of courses available for college-bound students. However, this bill would likely impose new costs for districts without any offsetting reductions.

First, a student could be enrolled as a full-time student in a district, and take an additional virtual course. The bill does not allow the district to count the student as more than 1.0 FTE, but would have to pay up to 1/6th of the base budget pupil to another district. The district would be receiving 100 percent of the base, but spending 117 percent of the base.

Second, a student might take a virtual course instead of one of the classes offered in the home district, for example, taking a more advanced math course than a course already offered. Although the

district will have to pay for the additional cost of the virtual course, it will have very little, if any, savings for that student: the regular class will simply have one less student in the room.

We would suggest several options the committee could consider.

First, you could, by legislation, set the goal of allowing increased access to virtual courses and direct school leaders to develop a proposal to accomplish that goal. This could be done either by charging the Kansas State Board of Education to lead the effort, or creating a special committee of school leaders.

This would allow districts to develop an equitable way to improve access and appropriately fund these courses. Such an effort should involve school board members, administrators and teachers from districts that offer virtual courses as well as districts that do not, plus other providers such as education service centers.

Second, at a minimum, we suggest this bill be delayed for at least one year to allow districts to prepare for its implementation on their own.

Thank you for your consideration.