

Renwick USD 267
600 W. Rush
P.O. Box 68
Andale, KS 67001-0068



Phone (316)444-2165
Fax (316)445-2241
www.usd267.com

SB 450

I would like to thank this committee for allowing me the opportunity to provide testimony in favor of SB 450. I believe SB 450, although it isn't perfect, provides financial movement and support for education after several years of difficult budgetary cuts.

First and foremost, I am pleased that the current finance formula is left intact by SB 450. There is nothing wrong with the current formula that adequate funding can't fix. One of the most important aspects of the current formula is the weightings. These weightings provide the flexibility for school districts to address the ever changing needs of the students we serve. I am also excited that SB 450 would restore funding to the BSAPP in the 2012-2013 school year. I am hopeful that whatever funding plan is passed it provides restored funding for next year. My fear is that there won't be enough support for any plan and the gridlock will prevent needed financial relief despite the funds being available.

Everyone here is aware of the levels of cuts K-12 education has been dealing with. An impact of those cuts in my district has been felt by my students, staff, and communities. Each year we move forward without restored funding impacts those collective students' education that much more. Without a funding increase next year, we will have 4th grade students & families, since they have been in school, which have experienced nothing but budget cuts. It won't take very long until we have students graduating who will feel that their education wasn't a priority for state leaders. My staff has received one raise in the last 3 years. When BSAPP is cut and not restored, rising costs for utilities, fuel, IT costs, cost of food, and health insurance will reduce our ability to maintain adequate staffing in the classroom, much less keeping our younger teachers from falling closer to the poverty line. Simply put, sustained cuts to the BSAPP are squeezing the life out of our public schools.

My district currently has a 31% LOB. Our voters narrowly passed the LOB increase with the assurance of a four year sunset provision. I don't believe that we would be able to pass an increase to 33% or 35%. One of my bigger concerns about SB 450 is that the LOB equalization will continue to be underfunded. Currently, the LOB is only funded at 85% of what the state's obligated to pay to maintain equalization. Every time that percentage drops it has the impact on either local property tax payers or a reduction of funding for our LOB. There are concerns that we are going to see that percentage drop next year anyway. I am afraid that allowing districts to increase their LOB by 2-4% will provide an even bigger burden on the state, which will result in everyone seeing their LOB equalization drop.

In closing, I support SB 450 as a reasonable step to restoring funding to appropriate levels. I believe it is important to keep the current formula and its weighting system. Our only concern with SB 450 is with LOB equalization. I can only commit to supporting the bill if the state fully fund state aid equalization so all districts can utilize the LOB portion of the bill. If education is to the state government, as the military is to the federal government, I don't think any of us want a generation of students to graduate without the benefit of the best possible education we can provide.