

House Education Budget Committee Testimony on House Bill 2248

February 21, 2013

Chairman Cassidy and Members of the Committee,

I am Gene Johnson, Superintendent of the Shawnee Mission School District, located in Johnson County. I appear today in support of House Bill 2248. Shawnee Mission is the state's third largest school district with 27,443 students enrolled in 2012-13. We are like all other school districts in Kansas who have adjusted to the declining state financial support. We have been reducing teachers and administrators, increasing class size, and closing schools in the last three years. We are very aware of the challenges you face at the state. We are managing the reductions in funding in our schools and our patrons are noticing the impact of budget cuts on the education their children receive. House Bill 2248 is one measure that can help us manage this current budget crisis.

House Bill 2248 creates a limited additional local mill levy that Shawnee Mission could use to fund extracurricular activities not required by state law including public performances, athletics, and other club activities. The mill levy increase would be capped at not more than 2.0 percent of the statewide average per pupil of local and state funding. Additionally, we support the inclusion of a requirement that our patrons and taxpayers must approve any such increase under the provisions of House Bill 2248.

House Bill 2248 provides us some greater flexibility to appropriately manage our financial resources in the most efficient manner possible. I cannot say now that the Shawnee Mission School Board would immediately pursue making use of extracurricular activities funds at any level. They would need to carefully consider the high expectations our parents, patrons, and taxpayers have to broad quality of life issues Shawnee Mission provides. Our locally elected school board members will have to weigh the community will and the district needs before determining whether to submit such a question to the voters. Nonetheless, House Bill 2284 supports and expands recent legislative initiatives to provide better local funding flexibility in the absence of any additional state support.

We support this bill and other options to manage the school finance formula more efficiently and fairly for all students in Kansas.

I would be happy to stand for questions at the appropriate time.