



House K - 12 Budget Committee H. B. 2270 Education Finance Act

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Chairman Campbell, members of the Committee:

I applaud the committee for reviewing the school finance bills introduced. Kansas schools need a formula to replace the block grant along with a stable revenue stream to fund schools.

The block grant has caused Wichita to reduce budgets \$36m the past two years. School districts face cost increases just as any business or household. The legislature and school districts both desire budgeting predictability. The needs of our students have increased. More students walk into our schools with greater needs today.

The leadership of State Board of Education provides a path to success for every student to be college or career ready. The Kansas economy requires more adults to have some post-secondary credential, whether a traditional bachelors or a certificate.

This committee is tasked with crafting a funding formula that allows Kansas school districts not only to respond to a changing educational landscape, but to also meet changing student demographics. Wichita's students speak 114 languages. Our students are meeting, interacting, learning to work in richly diverse classrooms. The skills they learn today, not only in class, but with classmates - will prepare them to be successful in the workforce.

The formula we build this session must meet the needs of all Kansas public school students to prepare them for success in life. We understand some students require more assistance to be successful. A formula must meet equity and adequacy requirements.

The bill today provides many elements that meet these criteria and some policies that will require additional analysis. Wichita Public Schools stands with you to find solutions.

The foundation aid increases available funding over four years. Students in poverty all too often enter school without preparation to learn. This bill rightly expands pre-school opportunities and funding all-day kindergarten recognizes the importance of early childhood education.

A child born into poverty, especially concentrated urban poverty, faces obstacles including lack of adequate health care, increased exposure to violence, crime and drug abuse. We have a commitment to prepare each student for success in life as an adult regardless of their start in life. The Legislative Post

Audit Cost Study included two poverty weightings. The audit found the additional cost to educate students in poverty was .484. The audit went on to expand on the needs of students living in concentrated urban poverty with a cost of .726 to support their learning. Ultimately both poverty factors were included in the previous formula at reduced rates: at-risk at .456 and urban poverty at .56.

Poverty is a factor that negatively impacts student performance. In year three this bill would move from the free lunch designation to the much lower U.S. Census poverty factor. Changing to a census based system will reduce Wichita's at risk funding by over seven million dollars. The census does not react to economic changes such as lay-offs or shifts in affordable housing (apartments or mobile home parks). The proposal to use Census times two is far short of the Legislative Post Audit's at-risk weighting .484 or the inner city poverty weighting .726.

The bill contains language, page 33 line 5 – 9, permitting proration of supplemental general state aid, a disqualifying provision impacting only districts eligible for state aid. Those districts not receiving state aid would not be subject to proration. This provision should be removed.

This bill will fund a more reasonable transportation level for today's families and communities by gradually lowering the threshold over three years to one mile. This policy will better reflect the safety needs of our families who have difficulties getting their children to and from school.

We urge the committee to remove the requirement for elections to expand the local option budget. The local option budget should be accessible for all districts. School boards are elected to manage the district's budget and should have equal access to local funding.

Mr. Chairman, thank you for the opportunity to provide my response on the school finance proposals. There are elements within several of the bills, which taken together, will create a good school finance plan, one that can provide Kansas schools with the resources necessary to educate today's students for tomorrow's future. Wichita Public Schools stands ready to work with the committee on resolving a school finance formula solution to meet the needs of students, families and communities.