



LEGISLATIVE TESTIMONY

FROM BLUE VALLEY UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT 229

**TESTIMONY ON HOUSE BILL 2270
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON K-12 EDUCATION BUDGET
February 15, 2017
Presented by: Dr. Mike Slagle, Deputy Superintendent**

On behalf of Blue Valley USD 229, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on House Bill 2270. We appreciate the foundation this bill provides, as we seek to build consensus around a sound school finance formula that best meets the educational needs of all students in Kansas.

HB 2270 is a school finance bill that appears to restore most of the aspects of the previous school finance formula. We appreciate many features of HB 2270, although there are a couple of aspects that we feel need a closer look. We, therefore, have taken a **neutral position** on HB 2270, in its current form.

Full-Day Kindergarten

We are encouraged by the inclusion of full-day kindergarten. Numerous studies point to the importance of early education opportunities to the long-term success of students. Given its importance, many districts have sought to provide the opportunity to students, without being reimbursed by the state. We believe its inclusion will be another important tool to ensuring the greatest educational success of students in our state – and to ensure it is offered equally in all school districts.

Foundation State Aid Per Pupil (FSAPP)

USD 229 applauds the fact that the foundation state aid per pupil increases over a three-year period to \$4,895. We also appreciate attaching a Consumer Price Index for increases in future years, as costs rise. This is an important first step in any school finance formula. However, in setting foundation state aid, we believe the amount *should be determined by an empirically-driven outcome target* that is set at such a level that all schools are allowed to pursue exemplary, and not merely proficient, academic outcomes.

Such an outcome target could be determined in several ways. One way that a number of other states have approached this is with what is known as the *Successful Schools Model*. This model begins by dividing school districts into size categories – e.g., small, medium and large. Those districts that have met predetermined state outcome targets, then, are used as a model for setting a target aid amount in each size category.

There are certainly other approaches used that can assist policymakers in setting a target, as well. *The point is that without such an empirically-driven approach, policymakers will never know if the amount allocated for state aid is adequate or not.*

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Broaden the At-Risk Funding Definition

USD 229 also urges a closer look at the at-risk definition in HB 2270. It is our position that the definition of at-risk should be broadened to include not only socio-economic indicators, but other student risk indicators. These include student academic performance data, attendance data and other data that identifies at-risk students. This is critical for school districts such as 229.

For example, our identification of at-risk students, according to the state's own definition, is nearly *five times greater* than the number of students that we received funding for in the old school finance formula. We urge the committee to mirror the at-risk funding mechanism with the state's current at-risk definition, which is already reported by all districts to KSDE.

Once again, we appreciate the effort that went into the development of HB 2270 and look forward to working with legislators in establishing a sound school finance formula for the coming years. We stand ready to assist in these efforts.