

Testimony before the K-12 Education Budget Committee

on

HB2270 – Creating the Education Finance Act

by

Shellaine Kiblinger, Superintendent, USD 308 – Hutchinson Public Schools

Today I'm submitting this testimony on behalf of Hutchinson Public Schools

February 15, 2017

Chairman Campbell and Members of the Committee:

I am supportive of the majority of the bill, but must oppose Sections 26 and 27 dealing with funding for low income students. As written, the bill will have serious, harmful implications for the students of Hutchinson Public Schools.

Kansas currently follows the rest of the nation by using free lunch applications as the basis for at-risk aid. Hutchinson passes all federal audits of our free lunch certification forms so we are confident when we state that 58% of our students qualify for free lunches. We are less confident of the annual census, which reports only 22.58% of our district living in poverty. One does not have to spend long in our community to realize the devastating impact poverty is having upon our community and students.

HB2270 as written creates an increase in our at-risk funding for two years as the Base State Aid Per Pupil increases, but then the funding drops sharply in 2019 when the switch is made to the census poverty rate. The chart below illustrates the variation in our funding.

This is compounded by the fact that we will no longer qualify for high-density poverty aid. Under the free-lunch method, those within a range of 35%-50% poverty received additional aid, and those above 50% poverty received an even high weighting. Given the much lower census percentages of poverty, very few districts would qualify. Although Hutchinson has four elementary schools where over 90% of students qualify for free lunches, we would qualify for no additional aid.

Hutchinson students benefit from at-risk funding in the form of increased safety and security, such as a school resource officer. We employ additional social workers and counselors to support our families and the social/emotional needs of our students. The at-risk funding is also used to provide additional academic supports and lowers class sizes by paying a portion of teachers' salaries in our most-at-risk buildings. In 2019, HB2270 as written would cause the loss of \$2,850,000 in at-risk funding (see attached calculations). Although we would experience an increase in base funding when the Base State Aid Per Pupil increases, that will need to be used to recruit and retain quality teachers as districts not experiencing this loss of at-risk funding will be able to offer more competitive salary packages.

I'd like to share an example of how at-risk funding makes a difference on a personal level. One of our families that has a kindergartener and a third grader were struggling with food, housing, and clothing. We learned of these issues when we were having behavior issues with the third grader. We made a call home and found out that the student was out of medicine and the family was not able to get it filled. Our family liaison social worker made a call to the home to see what help the family needed. The mother told her no help was needed at that time. However, the family liaison social worker continued to check in periodically and was able to develop a trust with the mom. Later, the family liaison helped the family by providing a list of community resources, coaching mom on how to ask for help, and getting financial assistance when they were homeless and living in a hotel.

The third grade student is now participating in daily morning mindfulness sessions with our school counselor, which teaches strategies to deal with stress and self-regulation. We have seen this child take a leadership role to teach others strategies that he is learning. He is able to use these strategies in the classroom which is increasing the amount of time that he is able to be successful in the classroom.

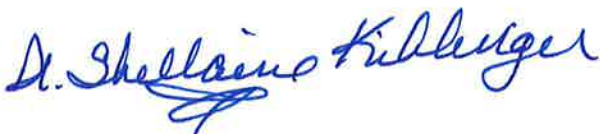
We couldn't do this work with our counselors, social workers, and family liaison worker. All of this is made possible through our at-risk funds.

There are several options for improving HB2270 as it relates to at-risk funding. Several of these ideas could be combined.

1. Create an average of poverty census and free lunch to minimize the impact
2. Use poverty census figures to calculate the at-risk weighting, and use free lunch count to calculate the high density at-risk weighting in Section 27.
3. Lower the 35-50% and 50% percentages necessary to qualify for high density at-risk aid so a similar number of districts qualify for this aid as they have in the past. With census poverty rates being much lower, adjust the thresholds accordingly.
4. Use "direct certification" rate in some manner in the calculations.
5. Continue to use free lunch count for the basis of all at-risk weightings.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. We stand opposed to HB2270 unless changes are made to address the severe loss of at-risk funding that will destroy the service systems supporting our most needy students.

Respectfully,



Dr. Shellaine Kiblinger
Superintendent, Hutchinson Public Schools

At-Risk Weighting											
Year	FTE Enrollment	# Free Lunch Students	Free Lunch %	Census Poverty %	# low-income computed by Census	BSAPP	Formula	Applicable High Density At-Risk Weighting	Total At-Risk Aid	Difference From Prior Year	
2014 (block calculated upon)	4852	2826	58%			3838	free lunches x .456 x BSAPP	Over 50% - free lunches times .105 times BSAPP	\$ 1,138,850	\$ 6,084,711	0
2017	4678	2548	54%			4253	free lunches x .456 x BSAPP	Over 50% - free lunches times .105 times BSAPP	\$ 1,137,848	\$ 6,079,357	(\$ 5,354)
2018	4678	2548	54%			4467	free lunches x .456 x BSAPP	Over 50% - free lunches times .105 times BSAPP	\$ 1,195,101	\$ 6,385,255	\$ 305,898
2019	4678			17.70%	828	4681	enrollment x census poverty % x .912 x BSAPP	Under 35% - no additional funding	\$ -	\$ 3,534,817	\$ (2,850,438)