



HOUSE K-12 BUDGET COMMITTEE
Representative Larry Campbell, chair

Testimony on HB 2270

February 15, 2017

The Kansas City, Kansas Public Schools (KCKPS) is pleased to testify on HB 2270, Creating the education finance act. This bill represents a genuine opportunity to move away from the harmful spending freeze imposed by the Block Grants, and to restore a functional school finance system to the state of Kansas, one that will support the needs of all students.

KCKPS believes that an efficient and effective school finance formula is one that provides school districts with the resources they need to educate the students they serve, by tying funding directly to the needs of those students. Every student needs sufficient resources in order to be educated well; at the same time, some students require additional resources, in order to receive a quality education. Students who are English Language learners, for example, who need to learn English at the same time as they learn everything else that other students learn, require additional resources. Students who suffer from the devastating impacts of living in poverty require additional resources. Students who live far from school, or who live in neighborhoods where walking to school is either challenging or dangerous, require additional resources. We are pleased that the proposed formula is responsive to those and other needs of children, and ties funding directly to those needs.

It will be important that the final school finance legislation takes these factors into account in a manner that provides sufficient resources to provide for the needs of each student. We are concerned that the move from using eligibility for free lunch as the determinate for poverty to the use of census data will not provide the additional resources these students need in order to be successful. In addition, because census data is not directly correlated to the specific students being served by a particular school district, it is necessarily a less accurate and efficient means of targeting additional resources towards the kids who need them most.

It will also be important that the final school finance legislation be accompanied by a stable state budget that is able to adequately support all areas of state work, and be sustainable moving forward. It is critical that the legislature take the necessary steps to remedy the ongoing shortfalls in state finances through restoration of a balanced tax plan. The future of the state's public education system, and thus the future of the state, depend upon getting this right.

Thank you for your consideration of this testimony.