



Testimony on HB 2344

Requiring the adoption of a local foundation budget by each school district

before the

House Committee on K-12 Education Budget

by

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Mr. Chairman, Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on **HB 2344** on behalf of the Kansas Association of School Boards. We oppose this measure for the following reasons.

As we understand the concept of the bill, it is to “capture” a portion of the current Local Option Budget to as part of the state’s foundational commitment to educational adequacy. We have two main objections:

First, attempting to claim a portion of the LOB as, in effect, base state aid, would result in an equal tax effort for the foundation. The point of the 20 mill statewide levy (originally 32 rising to 35 before being reduced in the late 1990’s) is that each taxpayer shares equally in the state’s commitment to education funding. However, the LOB is equalized only to the 81.2 percentile, which means approximately 19 percent of districts do not qualify for state aid because of high wealth, which usually results in a lower mill levy required to fund an equal LOB.

We cannot think of a reason why the Legislature should advocate, or the courts would allow, disparities in educational finance simply based on property tax wealth of the district.

Second, we question whether this move will make much difference. The Kansas Supreme Court has suggested it will look at whether the total revenue provided to K-12 education is adequate, not simply whether the “base” is adequate. Requiring each district to add levy a minimum percentage of budget will not add any more money to system UNLESS it requires some districts to increase the LOB, which would raise their local mill levy.

If it is the intent of the Legislature to require an increase in mill levies, the appropriate path is to raise the statewide mill levy and base state aid per pupil, not “mandate” more local funding.

KASB research has led us to one clear conclusion. Base state aid on the previous formula was far too low, and not regularly increased to meet rising costs. This led to increasing reliance on the local option budget, which in turn make it more difficult for the Legislature to provide appropriate equalization aid. It also led to a proliferation of weightings, especially for districts that were capped at the maximum LOB. This raised the complexity of the system.

We believe HB 2344 simply continues taking Kansas school finance in this direction, rather than fixing the system with a higher foundational amount for all districts. Thank you.