To: Representative Larry Campbell , Chair, House Committee on K-12 Education Budget

From: Marge Ahrens and Carole Neal, Co-Presidents, League of Women Voters of Kansas

Date: March 24, 2017

The League of Women Voters of Kansas has advocated for support of public education since 1929. The public school system's transparency, oversight and evaluation form the basis for determining if public expenditures fulfill the goals required by our Constitution of providing for "intellectual, educational, vocational and scientific improvement".

The League is opposed to HB 2410 because it does not adequately fund public education.

In a report from the Albert Shanker Institute entitled 'Does Money Matter in Education? (2nd edition), three topics were studied to determine whether the money invested in providing resources for public education had a positive impact on student outcomes:

Does money matter? Yes. "On average, aggregate measures of per-pupil spending are positively associated with improved or higher student outcomes."

Do schooling resources that cost money matter? Yes. "Smaller class sizes, additional supports, early childhood programs and more competitive teacher compensation….are positively associated with student outcomes."

Do state school finance reforms matter? Yes. "While money alone may not be the answer, more equitable and adequate allocation of financial inputs to schooling provides a necessary underlying condition for improving the equity and adequacy of outcomes."

There are critical decisions to be made regarding how best to fund public education that will meet the requirements set forth by the Supreme Court.

We believe that House Bill 2410 falls short of meeting the needs of the children of Kansas.

The additional $75 million put forth in the bill is inadequate and does not provide enough of the revenue needed by our schools to help students succeed. This is well below most estimates for what is needed to comply with the court's order. Over 100 school districts stand to lose funding immediately; in some cases, this amounts to millions of dollars.

House Bill 2410 also expands tax credits for private schools. The Department of Revenue projects that this tax expense for a select group would cost the state $9 million each year. Meanwhile public schools accept all children regardless of income, religion or ability and provide services to private school students besides. The League supports public education in that it reflect the ideal that all members of a community have a shared interest in contributing to the common good as they educate their children and build for their future and that of their communities.

The League does not have a position on Local Option Budgets but the bill appears to shift some state costs to local property taxes. Districts may lose money through the creations of separate local options which also take away local control.

HB 2410 does not adequately provide for early childhood intervention or career and technical training. Pre-K programs have proven to significantly increase later school performance in children, but funds have

not been designated. Vocational and technical training are essential in preparing our students to be career-ready in a changing world, but the current bill will have negative impact on school programs. In addition, schools could lose money for bi-lingual and at-risk programs, and for transportation.

The Legislature has a constitutional mandate imposed by the people to fund schools adequately and equitably.

The League places a high value on education and its members are willing to accept increased taxation in order to support Kansas schools. We think we are not alone.

Well-funded public schools are critical to a prosperous Kansas.

The League of Women Voters is a volunteer political organization that does not support candidates or political parties. It works to protect the vote for all, and advocates for public policy issues on which members have studied and reached consensus. Membership is open to women and men age 16 or older.