



Oral and Written Testimony SUB HB 2410: Kansas School Equity and Enhancement Act

To: Senate Select Committee on Education Finance

From: Dr. Cory Gibson, Superintendent of Valley Center School District, USD No. 262
President of the Kansas School Superintendents Association (KSSA)

Date: May 18, 2017

Positionality: **OPPONENT**

Chair Denning, Vice Chair McGinn, and members of the Senate Select Committee on Education Finance,

In order for us to educate and prepare the workforce of tomorrow, we must provide a stable, equitable, and adequate funding mechanism in place to meet the diverse needs of Kansas public school students. I very much appreciate the sacrifices you make to serve the wonderful State of Kansas. I understand that you are facing many significant challenges as a legislative body this year, however, the decisions you make between now and the end of the session can have either positive or dire unprecedented consequences.

I believe the framework of SUB HB 2410 has many positive elements:

- **Headcount:** All equitable formulas must include a headcount mechanism. An enrollment calculation that is based on current year is preferred.
- **All Day Kindergarten:** Funding all-day Kindergarten is a wise investment. Since most districts partially fund all-day kindergarten using at-risk dollars, this will allow additional flexibility to serve students in need of additional support.
- **Increased Funding for 4-Year-Old At-Risk:** Funding all-day pre-K programs is also a wise investment. Our district has had the same amount of slots for over a decade, yet our district’s enrollment and poverty level has dramatically increased. We have to turn away students that qualify for the program each year.
- **At-Risk:** The vast majority of states figure at-risk funding based on free lunch numbers. Flexibility to use these dollars for Pre-Kindergarten interventions would also be beneficial. The recommended House weighting (based on LPA audit) is preferred (about 20 million dollars additional for at-risk funding), the courts may look favorably on additional state allocated at-risk resources.
- **Additional Support:** Legislative action eliminated the support for professional development and mentoring programs for teachers. HB2410 brings those resources back, which is needed. Furthermore, this will allow free up dollars currently used in these areas that can now be used in the classroom settings.
- **Increase in Costs:** Once the base is considered constitutionally adequate, a formula must include some type of escalator to cover additional costs.

I believe there are areas in HB 2410 that should be refined, here are a few:

- **State Equalization Aide for Bond Issues:** The next potential lawsuit over school funding could be in the inequity that exists in state funding for bond issues. There exists over a 20% difference in state resources between bond issues and Capital Outlay. For Valley Center, due to a large student enrollment compared to property value disparity, bonds passed

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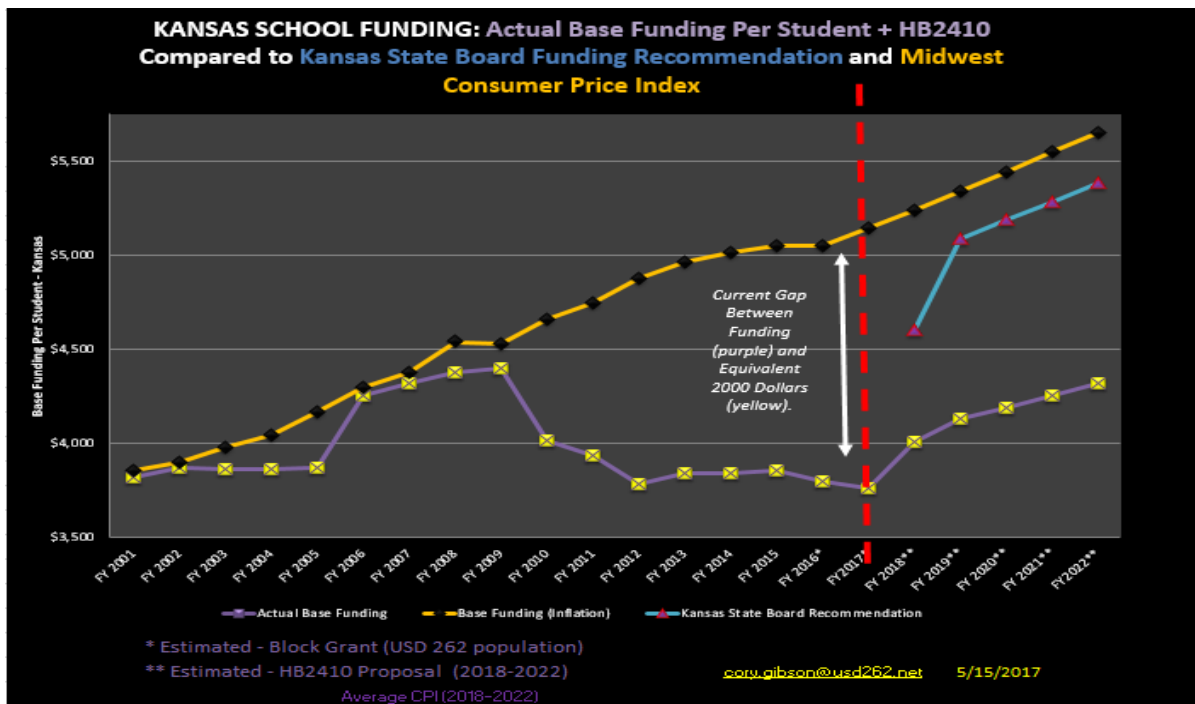
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prior to 2015 are currently equalized by state funds in the amount of 54%. Equalization of bonds passed after that date are only at 32%. School facility safety and technology should not be contingent upon where a child lives. Recommendation is to return to the formula prior to July 1st, 2015.

- **Special Education Funded at Statutory Level:** Funding for students with disabilities and/or gifted education has become more reliant on local dollars. Current law states that 92% of excess costs be covered, currently that number is around 80%, HB 2410, as proposed, does allocate additional resources to serve this growing population, however, it is not likely at the statutory level. As a frame of reference, our district transfers over \$1,000,000 annually from general fund to cover costs of special education.
- **Adequacy:** A vote for the funding measurers included in HB2410 is likely a vote for a school shutdown due to an unfavorable view by the Kansas Supreme Court. Below is an illustration of funding levels based on CPI, HB2410, and Kansas State Board of Education Recommendation.



Due to our demographics and lower assessed valuation per pupil, our expenditures are near the bottom in the state. Counting every dollar that passed through our district last school year, from gate receipts to state funding, only six of 286 school districts in the state spend less per pupil when you remove capital expenses (source: expenditure per pupil report – KSDE). An adequate and equitable formula is critical to our student’s future success.

Respectfully Submitted,



OUR VISION:

To Be a Premier School District Known for Excellence in Education, Innovative Instruction, Outstanding Programs, and Dedication to Students.