

Written Testimony to House K-12 Education Budget Committee
In SUPPORT of Senate Bill 142
Honorable Chair, Representative Kristey Williams
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SUPPORT Senate Bill 142 AN ACT concerning education; relating to the instruction and financing thereof; making and concerning appropriations for the fiscal years ending June 30, 2020, and June 30, 2021, for the department of education; amending K.S.A. 72-5132 and repealing the existing section.

By Claire M. Reagan: Olathe resident, parent of current Olathe Public Schools Early Childhood student, parent of future Olathe Public Schools student, and public as well as private school teacher

Honorable Chairperson Williams and Committee Members,

Thank you for giving citizens the opportunity to provide written testimony on Senate Bill 142. I submit this testimony on behalf of all Kansas children (including my own) who currently or will one day attend our highly sought after Kansas public schools. I write this based on my experience as both a parent and a teacher as well as a proud byproduct of public education. As stated in the testimony I submitted last week in opposition to HB 2395, I support SB 142. This bill allows for the full funding of our Kansas public schools and makes the much needed, time sensitive, and court-mandated inflation adjustment. It's straightforward, to the point, and addresses our immediate need. Moreover, it will must certainly put an end almost a decade of litigation. Education is about moving forward, which is why I'm writing to you to respectfully request you that you pass SB 142 out of committee.

Doing some research on this bill as well as how we got here has brought back some memories for me. I was a public school teacher when the most recent budget-crisis began. It was an exceedingly stressful time for everyone, especially coming on the heels of the public education fallout from the Great Recession. Two scenes remain vivid in my memory. The first is of students going to our school board to beg them not to cut their much beloved and immeasurably valuable programs – like marching band, drama, art, etc. The second involves a colleague; during the 2012-2013 school year, when our class sizes were just beginning to burst at the seams, I watched her not get a contract because she was the last hired in our department and the principal had to make a cut. This colleague retained her job only because another teacher offered to take her place on the chopping block. The week these reduction-in-force meetings were taking place was one of the worst I can remember. The morale of the entire building was negatively impacted. It is virtually impossible for teachers, administrators, support staff, and (most importantly) students to operate at their best when they have this type of stress weighing on their minds.

Because of SB 142's succinctness, it allows us to move forward, together. Yes, we have critical issues that call for debate and discussion: bullying, suicide, mental health, school safety, special education funding, and duration of bilingual education, to name a few. However, such vital concerns deserve to be heard without the dark and dense cloud of funding ambiguity hanging

overhead; they also deserve focused attention so the best path for our students can be established on all fronts. When all you think about is paying the bills, it's so much harder to gain a clear vision for what lies ahead. The nine-pages of SB 142 provides the clarity necessary for larger solutions to materialize. It is a sound and simple first step.

Growing up in Nebraska, I attended public schools K-12 and attended a public, land grant university; I could have stayed there after graduation, but I chose to relocate here after college because of the vast and stable employment available to me in Kansas. Kansas's renowned public schools brought me to our great state, which is also why my husband and I chose to live here rather than on the Missouri-side once we decided to start our family. And we are not alone; our schools attract people from all over the country because they know their children will be well taken care of in our classrooms. Sadly, where Kansas is right now, I'm not sure we're living up to that reputation.

It is my hope that Kansas can once again be seen as an envied example of public education, a place where all children are afforded access to the resources they need regardless of where they live or who they are or what additional needs they have, a state known for charging ahead to give students the education they so rightfully deserve.

I recognize the difficulty you face in these sorts of decisions, having so many needs to consider, and I very much appreciate the time and effort you've invested already. Hence, it is with the utmost respect that I ask you to move forward with SB 142.

Thank you for your careful consideration,

Claire M. Reagan
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