



Testimony before the
House K-12 Education Budget Committee
in **SUPPORT** of
**Senate Bill 142 — Appropriations for the department of education for FY 2020 and
FY 2021 in response to litigation; increasing BASE aid for certain school years.**
by
Game On for Kansas Schools
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Ms. Chair, Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of Senate Bill 142.

Game On for Kansas Schools is a nonpartisan, grassroots advocacy effort among Kansans who share a belief in high-quality public education as a right of all Kansas students. We advocate for Kansas public schools to ensure our teachers, principals, superintendents, and school board members have the resources necessary to deliver quality education to all Kansas students. We inform communities across the state about education funding and policy issues and legislation affecting our students. The Game On team includes members representing the spectrum of education stakeholders (parents, educators, and other community advocates), and our membership extends statewide.

We support funding inflation during the phase-in of the funding plan passed by the legislature last year as recommended by the State Board of Education. As we understand it, this inflation approach fills the hole that would otherwise be formed if the legislature failed to account for inflation during the phase-in of the Gannon funding plan. Parents across Kansas have witnessed the impacts of nearly a decade of budget constraints. We have experienced teacher and other staff reductions, increased class sizes, cuts to programs, cuts to supply budgets and library book budgets, increases in family-paid fees, years between raises for teachers, shortened school years and shortened school weeks. Though impacts were different in different parts of the state, they were real and were felt by families in urban, suburban and rural communities.

These reductions occurred during a time when parents were being told our children were going to need to compete not just with students from other states, but with students from other nations, if they are to be able to participate in a global economy. Our school districts were told they needed to provide greater career and technical opportunities, to teach soft skills and nurture social-emotional development, to prevent bullying, to improve safety and security of their students and provide technology that didn't even exist when we were in school. We also saw an increase in students living in poverty and English Language Learners.

We have started to make progress in restoring necessary staffing, programs and resources. If we fail to account for inflation during the phase-in of the funding, we are essentially going back to making cuts. We respectfully remind the committee members that the funding set last session was based on data on the costs of educating Kansas children. If the legislature does not add funding for inflation, then there will be students whose needs cannot be met, and programs or staff that cannot be provided.

We have come a long way. We understand the multiple needs legislators must balance, and we appreciate the hard work that so many have done to get us to this point. We urge this committee to take the necessary steps to end the Gannon litigation and fund an inflation adjustment so that the progress toward the Gannon funding is maintained during the phase-in period. We also support this simple approach to addressing the remaining issue in the Gannon litigation as opposed to HB 2395, which could create new problems and delay in assuring the constitutionality of our school finance plan.