

March 23, 2017

**Testimony to K12 Education Budget Committee**

Honorable Chair, Representative Larry Campbell, Room 286-N

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**[HB 2410 Creating the Kansas school equity and enhancement act](#) — OPPOSE**

Hearing: Friday, March 24, 2017, 1:30 pm Room 346-S

Chair [Rep Larry Campbell](#), Vice Chair [Rep Steve Huebert](#), Ranking Minority Member [Rep Ed Trimmer](#),

On behalf of the Kansas Parent Teacher Association (PTA), I would like to extend our appreciation for the opportunity to comment on this proposed school finance plan. Our remarks will be directed toward six primary concerns with this formula, two of which in particular compel us to oppose the bill. Associated recommendations for changes are included. Please know that as an organization of volunteers, our capacity to digest a 114 page bill of this complexity and produce testimony within a day means that our comments are not intended to be comprehensive. Components left unaddressed in this testimony are not intended to convey agreement on the part of Kansas PTA.

First, Kansas PTA is opposed to Section 87 of this bill and the inclusion of a tax credit scholarship program for tuition of nonpublic schools. We oppose the use of vouchers, scholarships, or tax credits toward the tuition of non-public, private, parochial schools, which have the authority to discriminate in admissions and dismissal, to provide sectarian religious instruction and operate under different rules than public schools (see [Legislative Platform and Priority 6](#)). Diverting public tax dollars to educational programs that can exclude Kansas youth whose educational needs are challenging and expensive is a school choice program, not a parent-student choice program. Furthermore, the recent Gannon Kansas Supreme Court ruling found that the State is failing to provide constitutional adequacy for about a quarter of all its public school K-12 students with the basic skills of both reading and math, and that it is also leaving behind significant groups of harder-to-educate students. High needs public school students do not need to abandon their neighborhood schools in order to make educational progress, but instead their schools need to be infused with the resources required to provide the opportunity for success. We urge that this section be eliminated from the bill.

Second, the plan's fiscal note estimates an increase of about \$75 million in the next school year. This figure is significantly smaller than the \$511 million in reductions to education funding since 2009 through cuts to BSAPP, as noted in the recent Gannon ruling ([p. 37](#)) and is smaller than the estimated costs triangulated by multiple credible sources of evidence. As noted by the KASB, the general operating funds in 2016 was about \$600 million below 2009 levels adjusted for inflation, at the time when we knew funding levels were constitutionally sound (Montoy, 2006). The Kansas Board of Education noted that a restoration of over \$890 million would be required to implement the Kansans Can vision of preparing each student for success consistent with the Rose Capacities. A sound conclusion of cost studies notes that "many of the ways in which schools currently spend money do improve student outcomes and when schools have more money, they have greater opportunity to spend productively. When they don't, they can't" ([Baker, 2016](#)). Kansas PTA recommends an evidenced-based level of funding that better reflects the actual costs to provide all Kansas youth the opportunity to achieve state education performance outcome standards(see [Legislative Platform and Priority 1, 2](#)).

Third, it is unclear whether the school accreditation reports in Section 43 and performance audits in Section 44 would yield sufficient information about the relationship between districts' progress toward achieving the state's

education performance outcome standards and their state aid. The Kansas PTA recommends a recurring education cost study to inform the Kansas legislature on the actual costs of providing every Kansas child with the opportunity to make progress toward and to achieve the education performance outcome standards, adopted by the Kansas Board of Education. An education cost function analyses is recommended to inform policy-makers with evidence on expenditures associated with growth toward and proficiency on education performance outcome standards, accounting for cost factors outside the control of school districts as well as the capacity to explore the efficiency practices.

Fourth, educational research on the effectiveness of comprehensive early childhood education is extensive (Pianta et al., 2012). The apparent absence of targeted kindergarten readiness in HB 2410 is a concern. Kansas PTA recommends adding components from HB 2270 that strengthen kindergarten readiness through effective practices like preschool-aged at-risk education funding, Parents as Teachers and full day kindergarten at 1.0 FTE beginning year one.

Fifth, the Kansas PTA is concerned about the changes made to the use funding sources, particularly in relation to foundation aid. While the structure of HB 2410 is less similar to the school finance formula prior to Block Grants than first assumed, it appears that local revenues would be required to supplement the allocation of state aid for operational expenditures. Further, it appears that the responsibility of generating a portion of that supplemental aid would fall those very communities of high density poverty and associated need. Over-reliance on local property taxes can create inequities in the formula. Kansas PTA recommends a close examination of this mixed use of state and local funds, with the intent of assuring the state is retaining its financial obligation to fund foundation aid and related obligations noted throughout the 114 page plan and refrain from shifting state's responsibility to local property tax payers.

Sixth, Kansas PTA is concerned about the revised Local Activities Budget and the rationale to separate revenues for instructional and non-instructional expenditures, as noted in Section 23. This component of the funding formula seems contradictory to providing Kansas youth with the opportunity to experience the spirit and breadth of the Rose Capacities. Kansas PTA recommends reverting to relevant components of local authority noted in HB 2270 or HB 2327, both of which are in closer alignment with Kansas PTA's [School Finance Guiding Principles and Key Elements](#) (2016).

Public education for all school aged youth is a primary responsibility of states and one in which Kansas is bound to by constitutional obligation, as reflected in Article 6:

- The legislature shall provide for intellectual, educational, vocational and scientific improvement by establishing and maintaining public schools.
- The legislature shall make suitable provision for finance of the educational interests of the state.

Kansas PTA recognizes that high quality public schools require the support and involvement of parents, caregivers and community patrons. While we are testifying in opposition to this bill, Kansas PTA continues to offer our partnership in the process of creating and refining a school finance formula. Thank you for your time and consideration.

*Mary Sinclair*

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**THE PTA POSITION**

*Kansas PTA is a [nonpartisan](#) association that promotes the welfare of children and youth. The PTA does not endorse any candidate or political party. Rather, we advocate for policies and legislation that affect Kansas youth in alignment with our legislative platform and priorities.*