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House Bill 2183  
House Education Committee  
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Mister Chairman, members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on House Bill 2183.

The Legislature has considered adding several new graduation requirements on Kansas high school students over the years. There have been bills increasing the number of math and science credits required. There have been bills mandating annual PE for all students. Last week you again heard a bill to add a financial literacy course requirement.

The expansion of such credit requirements may be done with the best of intentions but there are unintended consequences of such expansions. Each additional credit that is required reduces the opportunity for a student to choose from electives to round out their education. If you increase PE by six semesters, that is the equivalent of eliminating six other classes – classes in foreign language, the arts, etc. Adding additional required courses simply crowds out other courses.

In a typical six period high school, a student has 48 semester courses. Currently, eight of those are English language arts, twelve are mathematics and science, six are social sciences, one is PE, and one is fine arts. College bound students often take between four and eight semesters of foreign language and eight semesters of either band, orchestra or choir; some add an additional two semesters of math and two semesters of science. We have reached a point where, for many students, the addition of another one semester requirement is simply not possible.

In the last 35 years there has been an explosion in new technology. The Apple II or MAC classic many of us in this room may have had as our first computer would be a joke to today's youth who have more computing power on a phone in their pockets than most of us could have imagined when we were in high school. And with each generation of personal computer or tablet or phone, the technology becomes ever more user friendly, ever more intuitive. We see toddlers easily manipulating iPads.

Computer science classes are important classes but the purpose of such a class would never be something so basic as using a personal computer. It would more likely be valuable as a method to teach coding. But the fact is that coding is not something that most of us will ever be using. We depend on the coding experts, the engineers, and the IT professionals to keep making our interactions with computer technology even easier. A computer science class should be an elective offering, available to all but not mandatory.