



Testimony before the
House K-12 Budget Committee
in **OPPOSITION** to

House Bill 2395 – Amending the Kansas school equity and enhancement act and other statutes related to the education of elementary and secondary students, and making appropriations to the department of education.

by
Game On for Kansas Schools
Judith Deedy, Executive Director
March 14, 2019

Chair Williams, Members of the committee,

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 children. 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.

Kansans want the Gannon litigation to end.

As parents and public school advocates, we want the legislature to meet its obligation to our students and schools, to pass a clean education budget, and end the cycle of litigation. Our children have waited too long for improvements in the funding levels of their schools. Our schools need a funding formula that is adequate, fair, and predictable so their districts can develop and maintain meaningful programs that advance educational outcomes and give students a real chance to compete and succeed as adults. Now, at the end of this long Gannon road, we are frustrated to see this last-minute attempt by some in the legislature to derail the settlement of the Gannon case by making last-minute changes to the education funding formula. Instead of complying with the court's ruling and simply adjusting for inflation and closing the book on our decade-long education finance litigation, the legislature has instead chosen to, at the eleventh hour, alter the funding formula in an unworkable manner. Such action will prolong the frustrating and painful cycle of litigation surrounding the education budget and solve nothing.

We oppose the inclusion of voucher programs.

In addition to our deep concerns about funding elements of the proposed bill, we are disappointed to see another effort to implement "Hope Scholarships." We testified against this proposal earlier this session when it was presented in House Bill 2150. We continue to believe

this proposal is an inappropriate use of public funds. Although the proposed scholarship mechanism avoids the direct funding of religious institutions, the fact remains that most private schools in Kansas are religious. Religious schools are and should be free to exist in Kansas, but they should not receive taxpayer funding. The proposed voucher scheme is contrary to the spirit of our state constitution, it gives public dollars to religious schools and supports the segregation of students based on religious beliefs.

We have a concern over the process of this legislation.

As parents and volunteers, many of whom are currently on spring break, we cannot currently speak on the effects of every clause and proviso of this bill. But we can, with confidence, express our disappointment on the process of this legislation. This bill was submitted late in the legislative session after months of leaving the education funding issue unaddressed. As a result, this bill is being rushed through without reasonable appropriation of time for testimony and transparency. As concerned constituents, we are disappointed to be given so brief an opportunity to review this important 81-page appropriations bill, formulate an opinion, and submit testimony. As constituents, we ask that such tactics are not employed in the future.

Conclusion

As advocates for a strong public education system, we oppose this bill because it does not correct the current funding formula. After years of Gannon litigation, Kansas parents and teachers need an end to this crisis, not a last-minute conglomeration of proposals and ideas that never made it out of committee and are unlikely to resolve the ongoing cycle of litigation. We encourage the legislature to reject this bill and refocus its efforts on passing a clean education funding bill that will end the Gannon case and put our schools on a path of fiscal adequacy and certainty.