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KANSAS NATIONAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION / 715 SW 10TH AVENUE / TOPEKA, KANSAS 66612-1686

Timothy R. Graham  
Director of Government Relations & Coalitions  
Written Testimony – Opponent  
House Committee on K-12 Education Budget  
House Bill 2690  
February 14, 2022

Chairperson Williams, members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in opposition of House Bill 2690.

Kansas NEA believes that the single salary schedule is the most transparent and equitable system for compensating education employees and is highly skeptical of the efficacy of merit-based pay systems within the Kansas education system. However, KNEA does support enhanced compensation models in certain circumstances.

Kansas NEA asserts that such models must adhere to two guiding principles:

- ❖ Said incentives must include representation and agreement of all stakeholders.
- ❖ The design of such a system must be accomplished through the collective bargaining process.

House Bill 2690 does not adhere to either principle.

Furthermore, Kansas NEA has identified several criteria by which it would support enhanced compensations models. House Bill 2690 fails to meet many of them. A couple of them are listed below:

- ❖ Said models should be funded without reprioritizing existing resources.
- ❖ Said models should be accessible to all education employees.

The above written in mind, enhancing compensation for educators would be something KNEA might support if all educator-stakeholders have fair and equal access to those incentives, if those incentives are added to and otherwise do not impact school funding, and those incentives are part of the collective bargaining process.

Additionally, Kansas NEA is highly concerned about the process by which the Legislative Award for Teaching Program awards are determined. These concerns are focused particularly on the following areas:

- ❖ Said awards are building based.
- ❖ Said awards can have a negative impact on morale.
- ❖ Said awards can have a negative impact on collaboration between educators.
- ❖ Said awards are ultimately determined and awarded by one individual, the school principal.

Building a system of “haves” and “have nots” is typically the result of these kinds of merit-pay systems. Unlike the application of merit-pay in a corporate setting, educators don’t work within linear processes with the expectation of identical outcomes as a measure of success. Education is an art and a science and students are individuals who have individual needs where success is often measured on an individual basis.

Traditionally, “merit pay” systems discourage collaboration and instead force teachers to compete and protect strategies used to achieve additional pay enhancements. Further, when benchmarks are achieved by more eligible educators, funds for these systems become depleted.

In the case of the Legislative Award for Teaching Program, it appears that efforts to include educators all along the learning spectrum have been included. However, only certain schools are eligible and ultimately, whether or not a teacher receives an award is solely based upon the opinion of merit determined by a school principal.

In closing, KNEA advocates for leading the nation in educator compensation so that Kansas can bring more people into the profession, recruit professionals and retain dedicated professionals as a unique resource within our state.

As stakeholders, we strongly request that we are given the same opportunity as so many other organizations are in the legislative process and to be consulted in these matters. In doing so, we believe that we can work collaboratively to offer suggestions that represent the wishes of our members and make Kansas a great place to work in and receive a public education.

Thank you for your time.