

Testimony on HB 2612
February 1, 2024
Submitted by: Linn Exline, Superintendent

Chairperson Williams and members of the K-12 Committee,

I am writing to add my voice to the discourse surrounding HB 2612 and wish to express my gratitude for your consideration of my written testimony.

Upon examining the bill, it appears to presuppose that school districts are not abiding by existing laws. Accreditation, impacting every student in a district, should not be weaponized as a punitive measure due to differing law interpretations. Instead, accreditation should remain within the purview of the Kansas State Board of Education, those with expertise and understanding of K-12 education. The state legislature should entrust the State Board of Education with its appointed responsibilities.

I agree that it should be the expectation that school districts adhere to state laws and the regulations of the State Board of Education. There are many examples where laws are amended for clarity, where laws are challenged for interpretation, and where questions about intent of laws arise. School accreditation should not be withdrawn due to disagreements over financial allocation, reporting methods or interpretation. In cases where schools fall short of the standards, districts should be given the opportunity for review under the advisory guidance of the KSDE.

A requirement for KSDE to conduct a state audit prior to reinstating the district's accredited status places a focus on numerical data. The reasons behind numerical fluctuations, revealed as part of a comprehensive accreditation process, will likely be lost. Auditors should not be the gatekeepers for reclaiming accreditation.

This law seems paradoxical, given the historical context of the Kansas budget and the legislature's protracted delay in fully funding special education. Perhaps a discrepancy in interpretation of what is fully funded is at issue. Nevertheless, it took multiple lawsuits before general education was fully funded and special education remains underfunded.

Let's not embroil schools in the intricacies of law interpretation, thus distracting them from their primary objective—educating the students.

In conclusion, local school boards, overseen by the State School Board, govern our schools. Let us rely on their judgment in monitoring educators and daily operations. Should there be intentional violation of laws, rest assured, our boards will appropriately address the issue.