

Chairperson Williams and members of the K-12 committee,

I appreciate your time in considering my written testimony on HB2612. As I examined this bill, it appears to assume that school districts are not adhering to established laws.

I strongly believe that the state legislature should empower the State Board of Education to fulfill its established responsibilities. School accreditation goes beyond mere numbers or disagreements over budget allocations or reporting procedures. Schools are mandated to comply with state laws and regulations set forth by the State Board of Education. When schools fail to demonstrate growth or meet expectations, districts are given the opportunity to review their processes, with guidance and support from the Kansas State Department of Education (KSDE). Accreditation impacts every student in a school district and should not be wielded as a punitive measure based on a particular interpretation of the law. Accreditation should remain under the purview of the department that possesses the staff, skills, understanding, and experience in working with schools and districts, as well as the resources to support all schools. Another concern regarding the bill is the requirement for a state audit by KSDE to reinstate a district to accredited status. Every auditor I have encountered focuses solely on numbers, without considering the reasons behind changes in those numbers. Auditors are already burdened with heavy caseloads, so increasing their responsibilities will only detract from the quality of their work.

One might question why the legislature has been able to disregard the law for so many years by not fully funding special education. Considering the history of the Kansas budget, why did it take multiple lawsuits before the legislature fully funded general education? Perhaps this is due to differing interpretations of what constitutes full funding. Let us not entangle schools during interpreting laws and divert them from their primary role of educating students.

In conclusion, schools are governed by the State School Board and locally elected boards of education. I urge you to allow our local boards to oversee educators and their daily work. If there are deliberate violations of the law, I trust that our boards can address these issues effectively.

Thank you for your attention to these important matters.

Sincerely,  
Dr. Sylvia Trevino-Maack  
School psychologist