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Testimony to the House K-12 Education Budget Committee

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Bill HB 2738
Opponent
Written-Only Testimony

Dear Chair and Committee Members,

I write today to voice my opposition to bill HB 2738. For over ten years, I worked as teacher in the Kansas City area. During my time in the classroom, my students represented a myriad of abilities, and many required special education services in order to learn and thrive in our school environment. The services they received were instrumental in helping them reach their potential as well as creating a cohesive classroom with students of all abilities working and learning together. When I look back on my time as a teacher, I can see how invaluable the special education staff and their knowledge were when I was crafting my lessons and creating a classroom culture.

Though I am no longer a classroom teacher, I am now a mother to a young daughter who will soon begin school in one of our Kansas public school districts. While she may or may not need special education services in the future, I do know that she will have friends and classmates who will need and benefit from these services, and I want all of her future classmates to have the resources they need to be successful.

As I'm sure you know, the state has yet to meet its obligation to fund 92% of excess special education costs. The State Board of Education and the Kansas Department of Education recognize that special education in our state hasn't been fully funded since 2011. This has led to a shortfall of over \$100 million. HB 2738 does not provide additional funding for this year, which is a dangerous outcome for all of our Kansas students. When special education is not funded, the district must often transfer money from their general funds to cover the shortage. This affects the resources and services that are available for the whole of the student body.

I strongly believe that any change in calculation of special education funding should involve a lot of input from experts and stakeholders, including those within leadership positions in our school districts. This issue is of utmost importance since it directly affects our children, the next generation! To me, this means that it requires a careful study and thorough consideration of the impacts of any changes in funding mechanics. It is my understanding that the Special Education Task Force was created for the purpose of reviewing the current method of funding and determining if changes are needed. That is why I urge you to vote no on HB 2738 and refer to the Special Education Task Force for review. Our schools will not be fully funded until special education is fully funded.

Respectfully,

Kristen Blackton
Shawnee, Kansas