

February 13, 2024

Testimony to the House K-12 Education Budget Committee

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TITLE: Kansas Citizen and Parent

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BILL NUMBER: HB 2738

OPPONENT

WRITTEN ONLY TESTIMONY

Dear Chair and Members of the Committee,

I'm reaching out to express my strong opposition to bill HB 2738.

As a former educator, I've witnessed firsthand the invaluable benefits that special education services provide to a diverse array of students. These programs are essential for ensuring that all children, regardless of their unique needs, have access to quality education and the opportunity to reach their full potential. Therefore, it's imperative that we maintain a funding model that adequately supports these vital services.

As a parent, I find the lack of resources within Special Education alarming. Now with a bill wanting to further defund a needed and vital resource, it shows the lack of awareness from our elected representatives and officials of the indispensable role of public education for all children.

It's crucial that any modifications to the current approach for allocating the state's contribution to special education funding are carefully examined by experts and key stakeholders. However, this bill proposes an entirely new funding formula without adequately assessing its potential consequences.

The state has a responsibility to cover 92% of the additional costs associated with special education. Since 2011, it has been widely acknowledged by school districts, the State Board of Education, and the Kansas Department of Education that special education funding has been insufficient, leading to a deficit now estimated at \$173 million.

Regrettably, HB 2738 does not offer any increase in funding for the current or upcoming years. The lack of sufficient funding adversely affects all public school students, as districts are forced to reallocate funds from general education to make up for the funding gap.

A Special Education Task Force has been established specifically to evaluate the existing funding model and decide if revisions are necessary. I urge you to vote against HB 2738 and instead direct it to the Task Force for comprehensive evaluation.

Additionally, I recommend adhering to the incremental funding plans suggested by either the Governor or the State Board of Education to ensure special education is fully supported. Our educational system cannot be considered fully funded until special education receives the full funding it requires. All Kansas kids are hurt by the current \$173 million shortfall, as districts must transfer general funds to cover the shortfall in special education funds.

Respectfully, I ask that you vote no on HB 2738.

Sincerely,

Carrie Schuenemeyer
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