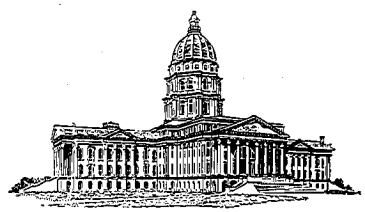


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Testimony for the House Education Budget Committee on February 29, 2012

Madam Chair and members of the Committee:

Thank you very much for this opportunity to respectfully suggest this Committee amend legislation to provide funding for Communities In Schools of Kansas. Joining me today is the Director of External Affairs for Communities In Schools of Kansas, Terry Leatherman, who will speak to the Committee about the specific funding needs of his organization, and how it will be used. I would appreciate a minute of the Committee's time to explain why I urge your support for this request.

I believe it is wise for the Kansas Legislature to invest funds we are entrusted to spend wisely, in ways that will produce great social good and, in the long haul, will reduce state expenditures. As a result, I support state investments that will produce less students dropping out of school, and more students attaining their high school diploma and being ready for higher education or a career. Please consider the

following:

- According to the US Census, the average college graduate earns around \$54,000 a year, while the average high school dropout earns less than \$23,000 a year. At that earning level and with the potential for income growth slim, the high school dropout is the recipient of the state social service programs we struggle so much to fund in the Kansas Legislature.
- The Alliance for Excellent Education took this point a step further by preparing an economic impact report on the economic impact boost Kansas should see if it reduced the number of

dropouts in half. The report is attached to my testimony. It suggests dropout prevention will lead to job creation, economic increase, and increased state tax revenue.

- Consider for a moment the plight of the high school dropout. Far too often, the dropout has minimal employment opportunity and low self-esteem, and far too much idle time. The dangerous combination is an incubator for anti-social behavior. A majority of the Kansas prison population did not graduate from high school.

As Kansas legislators, it is incumbent on us to seek out solutions to problems plaguing our state, and there are few problems more pressing today than the number of young people dropping out of school. Each dropout means a loss of a potential employee we desperately need in the Kansas workforce, and an expense we will likely face because the dropout will need to lean on expensive state social services.

Communities In Schools of Kansas is a program that can identify students in danger of dropping out of school, and then effectively come beside those young people with the support they need to succeed in school.

**It makes economic sense for the Kansas Legislature to support it.**

Communities In Schools of Kansas is part of a national network that is our nation's largest and leading dropout prevention organization. CIS has developed a rigorous program structure that works. Through its program outcomes and from independent evaluation of its effectiveness, we can have confidence our investment in Communities In Schools of Kansas will produce tangible results in students who are on the path of dropping out of school to instead stay in school and achieve academically.

Madam Chair, I will be happy to stand for questions later, but first please permit me to now introduce Terry Leatherman, the Director of External Affairs for Communities In Schools of Kansas, who will answer many questions about how CIS works, and detail their request for financial support.

*Rep. Louis Gregory*