

**Testimony to:  
K-12 Education Budget  
March 23, 2017**

From: Richard Proffitt  
Superintendent of Schools  
USD #413 Chanute

Subject: House Bill 2410

Position: Opponent

Chairman Campbell and members of the Committee:

I appreciate the opportunity to speak with you today about House Bill 2410 the proposed school finance plan.

I am the superintendent of Chanute, USD 413. We are only about 24 hours from when the first numbers were released for this bill. So I hope my thoughts are based on accurate information and interpretation of the bill.

I applaud members of this committee and others who are working to construct a bill that will meet the adequacy and equity requirements of the Court and meet the needs of all Kansas school children. There are aspects of the bill that I support and others that I believe need continued work:

- The phase in of All Day Kindergarten
  - Early childhood education is critical in helping us get students ready to enter school and be on track for learning.
  - However, the bill is void of any mention of Pre-K programs. I assume that 3 and 4 year olds would be counted as normal, but it is not clear.
- Increasing the base, known as Foundation Aid, is a good sign. However, it seems to be falling short in districts like mine.
  - According to the runs made by KSDE yesterday afternoon, our district would stand to lose \$-108,110 in state aid through the State Foundation Aid and an additional \$-34,828 in aid through the Local Foundation and Local Enhancement Budgets. Our district has had a 30% LOB, so we would have to consider a Local Activities Budget election to generate additional revenue. That election would be very difficult to pass in our district which is very tax sensitive.
  - These potential losses are only compounded by large losses that our district has faced over the past 2 years. Our district saw a major drop in assessed valuation due to a tax protest in 2014. Because of that protest, our district must repay \$1.2 million over a four year period. That repayment has placed an enormous strain on our budget. We have had to reduce staff and programs while increasing class sizes.
  - Even prior to that tax situation, our district had already begun to make cuts in staff and programming. We have found it extremely difficult to continue to meet the needs of all of our students with the limited resources that we receive. With such a high degree of poverty and students with special needs, we find ourselves

spending a larger portion of our general fund to meet the needs of those students which has reduced additional programs for others.

- If I understand correctly, the loss that my district could incur is due to decreased enrollment over a four year period. I understand how decreased enrollment, even within the “old formula”, affects a districts budget. However, in a time when the Block Grants were determined by the Supreme Court to not adequately fund public schools, I find it difficult to understand how a district, such as mine, stands to lose again.
- The enrollment formula is fairly complex. I understand that many in the legislature want a predictable number, but I would suggest looking at a three year average for districts with declining enrollment.
- I appreciate that there is a possibility of additional money to be used for Career and Technical Education with expanded use for other programs.
  - However transferring a flat amount per pupil from the general fund pulls precious resources away that we need for other programs and students.
  - I do appreciate the cost study for differentiated costs for different programs. There are programs that are more expensive to offer than others.
- I am very concerned that the reworking of the LOB into three different local budgets will not pass muster with the court.
  - In districts like mine, there is no guarantee that we could realize the entire amount allowed by the local budgets, due to an election, which could produce a loss of funding.
  - The structure of the local budgets reduces local boards of education control over much of the budget. The requirement of a 20% Local Foundation Budget and a Local Activities Budget which is subject to a local election severely limit the flexibility and choice that local boards have. Local control has been a deep-seated component of budgeting for years and I would like to see it continue in a new formula.

To be quite blunt, our district and others around the state, have seen numerous cuts to staff and programs through the Block Grants and even before. We need additional funding to meet all of our needs and keep up with the increase cost of operating a district. In our district with a 63% free and reduced population and a high percentage of students in poverty, we need additional resources to continue the programs that will keep our students on track, especially at an early age so that they can be the most successful they can be. Further reductions in funding will only serve to be overly challenging in continuing those programs.

Once again, I applaud this committee and others that are tackling this enormously important issue. I hope that these are just first steps in finding a satisfactory school finance formula. I hope that my thoughts will help bring clarity on how this affects at least one district in the state.

Chairman Campbell and committee, I appreciate your time hearing my concerns about the formula and how it affects my district.