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Written testimony opposing HB2410
Creating the Kansas Equity and Enhancement Act

Before the House Committee on K-12 Education Budget

March 24, 2017

From Dan Thornton, Executive Director, NKESC
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Honorable Chairman Campbell and members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to share our concerns related to HB2410. We recognize the committee's work to develop a school finance proposal that addresses the numerous structural issues related to public school funding.

As we reviewed the bill and the school district funding scans provided by KSDE we found the following areas of significant concern related to support for Northwest Kansas schools.

- 1) Of the 19 rural school districts served by NKESC (covering a territory of over 12,000 square miles which is larger than 9 states). We have 3 school districts that **can't** survive the funding cuts proposed and 2 districts that **will likely** survive but the cuts will clearly reduce their already limited educational options significantly (one of these is a single school district county). We are certain this is not what was intended for northwest Kansas;
- 2) Should 3 of our school districts close and their territory annexed into another school district---it should be noted that transportation cost will increase significantly. These increases add an additional burden to the existing school district and cost will not be off set by the added student count within the new formula;
- 3) Special Education continues to be underfunded in this formula. Current law funds special education at 92% of excess cost. Over the last few years schools have received approximately 80% excess cost for special education services. And, in light of the recent Supreme Court Ruling (Andrew F. vs. Douglas County School District) **special education cost can be expected to increase**;
- 4) At a time when career readiness is being recognized as crucial in our state we are concerned that the new formula appears to redirect CTE funds and limit vocational training; and
- 5) **We oppose use of public money for private schools.** We were appreciative that the new formula addressed some requirements related to quality for private schools. However, we feel it is important to note that private schools rarely accept all students. Quality is easier to attain if you can exclude those with learning behavior, or neurological weaknesses.

Although we could comment further, we feel these 5 priority areas are our most critical. We know the committee will receive additional comments from other school entities and recognize this is only a first step in a new school finance funding.

Thank you again for considering our concerns.