



Schools for Quality Education

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House K-12 Education Budget Committee

Senate Bill 142

Submitted by

**Dr. Kelly Arnberger, Superintendent/Elementary Principal, USD 482
Dighton, a member of Schools for Quality Education**

Chair Williams and committee members. Thank you for the opportunity to provide my testimony in favor of **Senate Bill 142**. There are many issues facing our citizens who reside in rural Kansas and it goes without saying that the future of our local schools is at the top of the list. We appreciate your efforts during the last legislative session to rectify the inequity and inadequacy of the school finance formula. That legislation resolved all equity issues with the Kansas Supreme Court. The court further determined that the legislature could resolve the remaining adequacy component if it provided the needed cost of living adjustment during the five-year phase-in to meet the state's proffered "Montoy safe harbor" and make the funding of our schools constitutional, thereby ending what many call the "cycle of litigation." We also appreciate that the passage of **Senate Bill 142** will allow school districts throughout the state to eliminate a major concern and spend their time planning approaches to better educating their students.

At Dighton USD 482, we have utilized the renewed state's financial support to address a variety of issues and we look forward to even more progress in the future once the court case is finally resolved.

During the last three years, we have accomplished the following:

Raised our base teaching salary from \$31,151 to \$33,000. Our plan over the next three years will be to increase the base by \$750 to \$1000 per year.

We have been able to hold our local property taxes steady due to the increase in state aid while enduring declines in our assessed valuations.

"Rural is Quality"

We have also launched our District Redesign that allows us to better meet the needs of our students. This includes providing a flexible schedule at the high school level, starting a project based learning academy, providing real work experiences off campus, and providing a personalized learning platform for students in grades seven (7) through nine (9) so that they will be able to possess the habits of success and the cognitive skills to ensure their final three years of high school will truly prepare them for post-secondary success.

Our elementary school embraces care and concern for the social-emotional needs of each student, recognizes that each child learns differently at a different pace, and most importantly, is committed to helping our students utilize their foundational skills in reading, writing, and math to pursue their curiosity and creativity.

We are not here to ask for what we have done without for so long, but rather, we are here to ask the legislature to now complete the task and help us provide for a system that will ensure equity and adequacy for the long term. For the first time in a decade, with the passage of **Senate Bill 142**, we will be able to look forward to embracing future opportunities without the fear of having to revert to obsolete methods due to a lack of resources. We urge the committee to consider a simple clean fix in response to the Gannon VI ruling. The Senate version of **Senate Bill 142** provides the amount of funding and BASE aid increases that the Kansas State Board of Education felt was necessary to satisfy the court in its latest ruling. The Governor followed the board's lead in her budget recommendation to the legislature which the Kansas Senate approved last week. Quick passage by the House of **Senate Bill 142** unamended will allow the Attorney General to prepare his brief to meet the state's deadline with the court. We feel that this is the best approach to keep our schools open next year.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony in support of **Senate Bill 142**.

Respectfully,

Kelly Arnberger
Superintendent/Elementary Principal
USD 482 Dighton