



SHAWNEE MISSION SCHOOL DISTRICT

February 6, 2019

Senate Select Committee on Education Finance
Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 44.

Chairwoman Baumgardner and Members of the Committee:

I am pleased to submit this testimony in support of Senate Bill 44. The Shawnee Mission School district believes that the specific funding and policy components included in Senate Bill 44 will address the issues raised in the most recent Gannon decision. The Legislature has worked diligently over the past decade to secure adequate funding for public schools. Lawmakers have crafted a revised funding formula, and secured sufficient revenue to address the issue of funding equity. The remaining challenge is to meet the constitutional requirement for adequacy.

Our legislative platform, attached, reflects the school finance policy priorities of our Board and our District. In the Shawnee Mission School District, we have invested the most recent restoration of funding to nearly constitutional levels in 2010. The base funding increases approved during the last two legislative sessions have helped us begin to improve outcomes, increase teacher/student support, and provide better pay for teachers. Our Board, our teachers, and our parents continue to push for additional counselors, nurses, and social workers, in order to address the behavioral health issues of our students. In our district, the additional funding for inflation provided for in SB 44 will address these challenges, and provide resources to continue our academic improvement.

Shawnee Mission School District supports the current Kansas Constitution and the additional resource the Kansas Supreme Court has identified as necessary. The Johnson County public schools collectively have endorsed joint legislative priorities that include support for the Kansas Constitution, behavioral health funding for all school districts, funding for inflation as the Court has approved, and an elimination of the bond cap. The joint legislative priorities are attached.



SHAWNEE MISSION

SCHOOL DISTRICT

We appreciate the difficult decisions you are required to make this session. After the work and resources invested in the last few years, resolution of the issue of adequacy is at hand. We support the solution provided in Senate Bill 44 and encourage your support.

If I can provide any additional information or answer questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Rick Atha, Ph.D.
Associate Superintendent of Organizational Support

Direct line: 913-993-6403
E-mail: rickatha@smsd.org



Shawnee Mission School District Legislative Platform 2019

The Shawnee Mission School District will advocate for all our students, employees, and district. We recognize, however, that the school district boundaries are not the limits of our support. The Shawnee Mission School District joins other districts in supporting constitutionally suitable funding of public education to serve our kids, our community, our economy, and our state.

1. Protect the authority of the Kansas Constitution that ensures suitable provisions for the equitable and adequate finance of public education for all students in Kansas.
2. Support increased funding and increased access to mental health and behavioral health services for students and families.
3. Support a response to the Gannon decision of 2018 that addresses the remaining Court concern that adequacy will require additional resources to address inflationary increases from prior year funding.
4. Support greater opportunities for communities to utilize operational and capital funds at the local level with equalization.
5. Support rigorous academic standards to prepare students to meet or exceed the Rose Standards in preparation for success in a globally competitive workforce.
6. Support a stable school finance formula that covers the costs of providing every student the opportunity to be college and career ready, that is financially sustainable, promotes efficiency, accountability, greater local funding flexibility, target students at risk with supports for teachers and students, and ensures educational excellence for all students in Kansas.
7. Support special education services and state funding at the required 92% of excess cost and mitigate the wide variance in reimbursements.



8. Expand funding for early learning programs to recognize and address academic and social needs as quickly as possible for all kids, particularly children at-risk.
9. Support fully funding local, state, and federal mandates.
10. Support legislation to repeal or reduce the private education tuition tax credit program, and oppose vouchers, or similar programs.
11. Support maintaining non-partisan school board elections and seek resolution to the challenges created by the fall election cycles.
12. Support the sole authority of locally elected school boards to approve charter schools, as granted by state statute in accordance with the Kansas Constitution and require charter schools to operate with the same requirements as public schools.
13. Support the authority of the State Board of Education and locally elected school boards to adequately measure student achievement and educational success as granted by state statute in accordance with the Kansas Constitution and in conjunction with legislative oversight. Grading schools and districts based on measures such as standardized tests or other static measures do not accurately reflect performance.
14. Support policies and actions to recruit and retain educators and support staff including fully funding KPERS, returning to a KPERS Tier 2 structure and the associated benefits therein for employees hired after January 2015, and restoration of statewide due process.



Johnson County School Districts Joint Legislative Priorities 2019

The six public school districts of Johnson County, Kansas (Blue Valley, DeSoto, Gardner-Edgerton, Olathe, Shawnee Mission, and Spring Hill), serving a combined 100,000 public school students, have come together to advocate on the following legislative priorities to be addressed in the 2019 Kansas legislative session.

Sanctity of the Kansas Constitution – We vehemently support and defend the protection of the authority of the Kansas Constitution that ensures suitable provisions for the equitable and adequate finance of education for all students in Kansas. We oppose any efforts to amend the provisions of the Kansas Constitution that ensure the inalienable rights of the students of the state of Kansas to a quality public education.

Behavioral and Mental Health Services – In the wake of growing concerns about student health and safety, from school shootings to suicide, we support expanding the current \$10 million pilot program for school-based mental health services in collaboration with community mental health services-funded programs to all school districts in Kansas. Providing for dedicated and sustained funding would allow districts to continue to increase the number of counselors and social workers available to support students and families. We support the restoration of state funds to the Kansas Department of Aging and Disability Services budget, and we oppose any further reduction to community mental health centers (CMHC) grant funding.

Inflation factor added to the Base State Aid – We support the addition of an inflationary adjustment factor to the base state aid (BASE) of the school finance formula. The 2018 Kansas Legislature adopted a plan to restore Kansas school district funding to constitutional levels by adding approximately \$90 million per year over five years. The Kansas Supreme Court has approved that plan but said if the Legislature phases in the amount, it must add an inflationary adjustment, so the value is maintained. The State Board of Education has recommended a plan to add an inflation adjustment over the next four years, adding approximately \$90 million per year. If the Legislature agrees to this funding early in the 2019 session, it could resolve the current litigation and allow school districts to more effectively plan for the upcoming school year, rather than waiting until the end of the session and beyond.

Elimination of the Bond Cap – We support the repeal of the legislation enacted in 2016 as part of the school finance bill that required districts to submit bond requests to the State Board and capped the amount of state aid disbursed for school district bond projects at the amount of bond and interest debt retired in the previous year. The law has been amended to adjust for inflation and to exempt the first \$175 million of any individual potential bond issue from the cap, but we continue to be concerned that the cap will hamper district efforts to improve or expand their buildings and facilities. We call for repeal of the bond cap.

