



Testimony before the
Senate Select Committee on Education Finance
in **SUPPORT** of

**Senate Bill 44 — Appropriations for the department of education for FY 2019, 2020
and 2021; increasing BASE aid for certain school years; continuing 20 mill
statewide levy for schools and exempting certain portion of property used for
residential purposes from such levy**

by
Game On for Kansas Schools
Judith Deedy, Executive Director
February 6, 2019

Ms. Chair, Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of Senate Bill 44.

Game On for Kansas Schools is a nonpartisan, grassroots advocacy effort among Kansans who share a belief in high-quality public education as a right of all Kansas students. We advocate for Kansas public schools to ensure our teachers, principals, superintendents, and school board members have the resources necessary to deliver quality education to all Kansas students. We inform communities across the state about education funding and policy issues and legislation affecting our students. The Game On team includes members representing the spectrum of education stakeholders (parents, educators, and other community advocates), and our membership extends statewide.

We support Senate Bill 44 as the vehicle to put the Gannon litigation behind us and to continue on the path to providing our children with the educational resources they need. Our comments today are focused on the need to adopt this plan and particularly on the need to add funding for inflation during the phase-in of the plan passed by the legislature last session. Parents across Kansas have witnessed the impacts of nearly a decade of budget constraints. We have experienced teacher and other staff reductions, increased class sizes, cuts to programs, cuts to supply budgets and library book budgets, increases in family-paid fees, years between raises for teachers, shortened school years and shortened school weeks. Though impacts were different in different parts of the state, they were real and were felt by families in urban, suburban and rural communities.

These reductions occurred during a time when parents were being told our children were going to need to compete not just with students from other states, but with students from other nations, if they are to be able to participate in a global economy. Our school districts were told they needed to provide greater career and technical opportunities, to teach soft skills and nurture social-emotional development, to prevent bullying, to improve safety and security of their students and provide technology that didn't even exist when we were in school. We also saw an increase in students living in poverty and English Language Learners.

We have started to make progress in restoring necessary staffing, programs and resources. If we fail to account for inflation during the phase-in of the funding, we are essentially returning to making cuts. We respectfully remind the committee members that the funding set last session was based on a rigorous analysis of the costs of educating Kansas children. If the legislature

does not add funding for inflation, then there will be students whose needs cannot be met, and programs or staff that cannot be provided.

We have come a long way. We understand the multiple demands legislators must balance, and we appreciate the hard work that so many have done to get us to this point. We urge this committee to take the necessary steps to end the Gannon litigation and to do so in a timely manner so that our school districts can plan their budgets and make efficient use of the resources they are being provided for the benefit of Kansas students and their families. We urge this committee to pass Senate Bill 44.