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WRITTEN ONLY - Testimony to Senate Selection Committee on Education Finance

Honorable Chair, Senator Molly Baumgardner

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Room 445-S, State Capitol Building

Senate Bill 142 – School Finance. Appropriations for Dept of Education for FY 2020 and FY 2021 in response to litigation; increasing BASE aid for certain school years¹

Hearing: Wed, March 6, 2019, 1:30 pm, Room 144-S

Proponent*

Chairwoman Baumgardner and Committee Members,

It is with regret that a member of KS PTA leadership cannot be in person today to provide testimony on this critical issue of school finance. Thank you for the opportunity to submit written-only testimony on Senate Bill 142, on behalf of the Kansas Parent Teacher Association (PTA). The PTA is a non-partisan, volunteer organization, whose mission is to make every child's potential a reality by engaging and empowering families and communities to advocate for all children.

As we noted when the PTA testified on SB 44, our first legislative priority states that the "Kansas PTA supports efforts to strengthen and improve the Kansas public school finance system, which includes legislation and policies that uphold the state's constitutional obligations to make suitable provision for the finance of the Kansas public schools, achieving both equitable and adequate funding, as informed by actual costs" ²

The Kansas PTA respectfully asks that the 2019 Kansas legislature prioritize school finance this session. We urge a timely resolution of the Gannon school finance lawsuit, accounting for inflation through an appropriate increase to base state aid. We ask that committee members support a school finance resolution that meets constitutional expectations as outlined by the Kansas Supreme Court, such as the State Board of Education recommendations and in keeping with the State's own argument to return to good standing under the *Montoy Safe Harbor*. *Kansas PTA supports SB 142, to the degree that this plan is in alignment with these parameters, as well as the Governor's proposal.

The Kansas PTA considered several criteria from which we base our position on this bill, including the following:

First, SB 142 approaches restoration of public school funding to a constitutional level of adequacy through fiscal year 2021.

We understand that the working definition of *adequacy* in Kansas is the amount of funding that should have been appropriated in 2010: ³

- after action to address the earlier Montoy case,
- but before budget cuts associated with the Great Recession and tax policy changes, and
- adjusted for inflation at the years of restoration.

We recognize that this *Montoy Safe Harbor* reflects that last time in which school funding for public schools was found to be constitutionally adequate⁴ and can be achieved again with an additional inflation adjustment over the remaining years of the phase-in period. Multiple cost studies and cost related analyses would suggest this funding level to be a reasonable estimate of the actual costs to districts, for meeting the state education standards.⁵ One challenging assumption is this estimate implies that the learning needs of Kansas students, as well as their expected educational achievements, are relatively the same as they were ten years ago. Yet we understand that the approach used to determine adequacy of school funding levels is based on a methodology that estimates the actual costs of providing all students the opportunity to meet the state education standards. And finally, the current school finance law includes accountability provisions in a series of performance audits, for which updated cost studies are scheduled.

Second, SB 142 continues to restore opportunities for all students to achieve.

This bill, along with recent steps to restore state aid, will allow districts to provide more opportunities for students to make meaningful educational growth and to accelerate learning for students who are behind grade level. Districts are applying these funds in a variety of ways, from expanding comprehensive early childhood, to strengthening at-risk programs, to supporting student readiness opportunities for postsecondary education and the workplace. Districts are working to restore competitive wages to recruit and retain qualified educators. Based on recent national data, Kansas ranks 46th in teacher wage competitiveness, with educators at ages 25 and 35 years earning less than 70% of their non-teacher peers of similar education levels and age – putting our youth at risk of losing great teachers to our surrounding states and to other professions.⁶

Third, SB 142 provides an increased degree of much needed stability and predictability.

For the past ten years, parents and educators alike have been asking for a plan that fulfills the constitutional obligation to our children’s educational needs and the future of our state. With this bill, parents will once again be able to bank on the school doors being open in the fall. Our district leaders and teachers will be in a better position to engage in long-term planning and to better optimize their use of finite resources.

Fourth, we know that money matters and costs are not stagnant.

Rigorous evidence like Bruce Baker’s (2018) research and Lori Taylor’s (2018) cost analyses, affirms that education funding, spent intentionally, makes a difference in students’ educational outcomes.⁷ These studies in Kansas have shown an .83% increase in spending is associated with a 1.0% increase in district performance outcomes – almost a one-to-one relationship.⁸

We also know that Kansas public schools are efficient and intentional. The WestEd Taylor study reported a 95.6% efficiency rating – meaning public school buildings were producing nearly 96% of their potential output on average.⁹ KSDE data indicates that 75% of the operational budgets of our public schools went toward direct support for students and teachers in the classrooms, with less than 5% going towards general/central administration in 2018.¹⁰

We know that level of education is a protective factor against recessions. Georgetown University found that workers with a Bachelor’s degree have added 8.4 million jobs in the post-recession recovery, with 187,000 of those jobs gained during the Great Recession, but workers with a high school diploma or less lost 5.6 million jobs in the recession and added back only 80,000 between January 2010 and April 2016.¹¹ This means

an adequate investment in public education will help Kansans weather the storms of cyclical recessions, along with a balanced tax policy that minimizes the fluctuations in revenue during these same cycles.

And finally, we know this reinvestment in public education is a reasonable alignment of Kansas budget with Kansas priorities. KASB reminds us that school expenditures as a percent of Kansas personal income is less than 3% of what districts can spend on general operations and below 4.5% of total expenditures including KPERS, both lower than in the 2000s and below the 20-year average.¹²

For the past ten years, parents and educators alike have been urging the legislature to fulfill their constitutional obligation to our children's educational needs and the future of our state. For every year legislative games are played and insufficient, unpredictable funding in perpetuated, Kansas children suffer. They miss opportunity to make meaningful progress and their sense of belonging to school is upended as programs are eliminated, courses discontinued, teachers leave, positions left unfilled, and administrators unable to plan ahead. Please make the school finance inflation fix your education policy priority this session.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

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Cc: Lauri DeNooy, President-Elect
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THE PTA POSITION

Kansas PTA is a [nonpartisan](#) association that promotes the welfare of children and youth. The PTA does not endorse any candidate or political party. Rather, we advocate for policies and legislation that affect Kansas youth in alignment with our legislative platform and priorities. [PTA mission and purpose](#) have remained the same since our inception over 100 years ago, focused on facilitating every child's potential and empowering families and communities to advocate for all children.

¹ Senate Bill 142 (Kansas Legislature, 2019) http://kslegislature.org/li/b2019_20/measures/sb142/

² KS PTA Legislative Platform (2018-2019) http://www.kansas-pta-legislative.org/sites/default/files/2018KsPTALegPriorities_0.pdf ; see also our KS PTA Guiding Principles for a School Finance Formula (2016) http://www.kansas-pta.org/files/documents/KsPTASchFinPosition2016_Final.pdf

³ Tallman Education Report (2018, July 24). State Board proposal would adjust Legislature's school funding for inflation. <https://kasb.org/blog/state-board-proposal-would-adjust/>

⁴ Montoy Case for 2010 (Robb Law, retrieved Feb 2019). http://www.robblaw.com/html/school_finance.html

⁵ Augenblick & Myers (2002); Baker (2018); Duncombe & Yinger (2005); Kansas Legislative Post Audit (2006); Taylor, Willis, Berg-Jacobson, Jaquet & Caparas (2018).

⁶ Baker, B. (2018). Educational Inequality and School Finance: Why Money Matters for America's Students. Harvard Education Press, Cambridge, MA, pp. 63-63; KASB powerpoint presentation (2018, Dec 12).

⁷ Baker, B. (2018). Educational Inequality and School Finance: Why Money Matters for America's Students. Harvard Education Press, Cambridge, MA; Tallman Education Report (2019, Jan 16), Why funding matters in improving education, and how we know. <https://kasb.org/blog/why-funding-matters-in-improving-education-and-how-we-know/>

⁸ Kansas Legislative Post Audit (2006, Jan). Cost study analysis. Elementary and secondary education in Kansas: Estimating the costs (2006, Jan) http://www.kslpa.org/media/files/highlights/media/files/temp/05pa19_nomfJG1.pdf; Taylor, L., Willis, J., Berg-Jacobson, A., Jaquet, K. & Caparas, R. (2018). Estimating the costs associated with reaching student achievement expectations for Kansas public education students: A cost function approach. Prepared by WestEd for the Kansas Legislature.

⁹ WestEd Taylor (2018, p. 63).

¹⁰ KASB (2018, Nov). Kansas public education: Commitment to success, p. 18. <https://kasb.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Commitment-Revised-November-8-2018.pdf>

¹¹ Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce. (2016). America's divided recovery: College haves and have-nots. Washington, DC. <https://1gyhoq479ufd3yna29x7ubjn-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/Americas-Divided-Recovery-web.pdf>

¹² KASB (2018, Nov). Kansas public education: Commitment to success, p. 15. <https://kasb.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Commitment-Revised-November-8-2018.pdf>