

# Jayme Morris-Hardeman

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President, USD 383 Board of Education

## House Committee on K-12 Education Funding

Oral Testimony by Jayme Morris-Hardeman, USD 383 Board of Education President in opposition to HB 2738 for February 13, 2024

I am very proud of the education provided to our students in USD 383 (Manhattan/Ogden). We are truly dedicated to the mission to prepare all students for success as lifelong learners, earners, and citizens demonstrated through our core beliefs of acceptance, accountability, courage, joy, and trust. In addition to serving as the President of the Board of Education, I have been a Court-Appointed Special Advocate for 25 years and a trained Education Advocate for the state of Kansas. I am also the parent of two children, both of whom have benefitted from special education services.

Public education is one of the most important efforts we can make to promote the future of our state. We appreciate the state's ongoing commitment to general education funding to support our students. Full funding for special education is essential to our work to support and inspire learning for every student, every day.

Every school year, USD 383 uses approximately \$3.4 million from our general and supplemental general fund budget to pay for special education services that are required by state and federal law but aren't being fully funded. By spending our general fund dollars on special education, we are not able to provide every student with the learning environment they deserve.

Fully funding special education services at the statutory amount of 92% of excess cost is good for all Kansas students. A dedicated special education budget funded by the state and federal government would allow our district to reduce class sizes, provide more intensive interventions for students in general education who are falling behind state standards, and increase staff retention, particularly of paraeducators who play a critical role in our students' learning. Smaller class sizes and more paraeducators and aids in the classroom allow for more cooperative learning or working in small groups on projects, which increases the deep learning of students and creates more on-task behavior as students work to master updated state standards critical for their future as well as the future of the Kansas workforce.

Thank you for making funding for public education a priority in Kansas.