

January 2, 2024

Members of the Special Education and Related Services Task Force.

Thank you for allowing me to speak to you today. This topic is especially important to me in that I had two children that received special education services from the public school system. My oldest, who is 21-years-old, just aged out of special education services in May.

Our school district afforded him the services that he needed even though these services were an extreme cost. My son needed to be at a private residential school to meet his needs. My husband and I know that we were very fortunate for our school district to do this. We also know that this was a hardship on our school district. When you have special education services that are mandated in an individualized education plan those must be followed, no matter the cost. If special education is not fully funded, districts have to pull the money from somewhere. Where is that shortfall going to come from? The general education fund.

All students are affected when districts do not have enough funding. In my local school district, it has become a safety issue, as they have had to stop bussing students from addresses had been previously bussed. Due to the lack of sidewalk and safety measures, there was a student hit by a car while walking to school.

It seems that our biggest disagreement in Kanas is responding to how we help those who most need the help. Every time we turn around there is another battle about special education funding, the I/DD waiting list funding, Medicaid expansion, and nothing happens. It's time for our state to stop turning their back on those with additional needs. The first start would be to FULLY fund special education in this year's budget.

Thank you.

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