

**Testimony to the
Task Force on Special Education and Related Services Funding
From Jenny Skillman
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Task Force members:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony on Special Education funding. My name is Jenny Skillman, and I am the parent of a high school junior in USD 497 and a 2023 Kansas public school graduate who is now in the School of Architecture and Design at the University of Kansas. My family chose to move to Kansas 17 years ago in part because of its strong public education system. In fact, my husband and I both continued our employment with east coast companies and could have chosen to live anywhere.

As a product of public education through college and the daughter of a retired public high school Special Education teacher, I implore you to fully fund Special Education per current state law at 92% of district excess costs as already defined. Last school year in our district alone, more than 8 million dollars had to be transferred from our already strapped general fund to cover the cost of mandated services. All our children's educational experiences have been directly affected through alarming programming cuts and increased class sizes. Educators are stretched to the breaking point. Objectively, these and other adverse effects have been compounded by years of inadequate SPED funding.

Fully funding Special Education per current state law would enable our district to enhance opportunities, more competitively pay all of our educators, and hire more paraeducators who are extremely valuable and desperately needed for both direct interaction with students with IEPs and overall classroom success, thus improving the learning environment for all.

I am paying close attention to this and all education issues as should anyone running a business in Kansas who hopes to attract and retain employees. My family would strongly consider alternatives if faced with the choice to move here again knowing about the persistent resistance to meet state obligations to Kansas public schools. Honoring your commitment to fully fund Special Education per current state law would positively affect ALL of our children, families, communities, and the ultimately the state's economy.

Thank you again for the opportunity to submit testimony about this very important issue.

Sincerely,
Jenny Skillman
jbyrdskillman@gmail.com