

KANSAS
ASSOCIATION



OF
SCHOOL
BOARDS



1420 Arrowhead Road | Topeka, Kansas | 66604-4024
785-273-3600 | 800-432-2471 | 785-273-7580 FAX
www.kasb.org

Testimony before the
House Education Budget Committee

by

Mark Tallman, Associate Executive Director for Advocacy
Kansas Association of School Boards

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Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on issues in the Department of Education budget for FY 2013. KASB believes we must begin to restore the cuts in educational funding since 2008-09 resulting from the state and national recession. Among our major concerns are:

- Funding for general state aid this year is \$278 million below 2009, a reduction of 8.6 percent. On a per pupil basis, the reduction has been even greater, over 10 percent. This is the reduction in general state aid for each actual pupil, not the cut in the base budget per pupil. The increase in the consumer price index from 2009 through 2012 is expected to be around 8.0 percent. The state should raise base state aid to respond to previous cuts, rising costs and increasing expectations.
- Although districts collectively increased their local option budgets by about \$75 million statewide since 2009, the reduction in total general operating budgets (general fund plus LOB) is still over 4.8 percent. However, many districts were not able to increase their local option budget due to the state maximum. Other districts actually reduced their LOB due to loss of state LOB aid. *Local option budget aid should be increased to the statutory level.*
- Capital outlay state aid was completely eliminated, making it more difficult – and more expensive to the local taxpayer – for lower wealth districts to address capital infrastructure needs. *Funding should be restored.*
- Professional development state aid, which is critical to improving classroom instruction, has been eliminated. To continue to improve teaching and learning, professional development and mentoring funding should be restored.
- Special education state aid remains below the 92 percent statutory goal for state funding of excess costs. *To ensure Kansas meets federal maintenance of effort requirements and cover rising costs of special services, special education should be fully funded at the 92 percent level.*

School leaders understand the economic issues that caused these cuts, and we recognize they would have been even greater if legislators had not been willing to increase the sales tax. However, as the

economy recovers and state revenues and balances increase, we believe the state must begin to restore funding to maintain our state's tradition of educational achievement.

Since 1975, funding for school district operating budgets – a combination of state and local funding – has risen 704 percent, or an average of 5.9 percent per year. However, school funding has not increased faster than total personal income in the state, which increased 776 percent, or 6.1 percent per year. For at least 35 years, Kansans – through their state and local representatives – have increased spending in education at about the same rate as their income has grown. They have, quite literally, invested a consistent share of income in their children's future. Unfortunately, we estimate that school operating budgets this year are at the lowest level since *at least* the early 1970s compared to Kansas personal income.

To make sure all school children in the state have an opportunity to share in this investment, Kansans have turned from extremely unequal local property tax resources for education finance to state funding from sales and income taxes. State aid has increased from less than 50 percent of district operating budgets in 1975 to over 80 percent, providing a substantial reduction in property taxes for schools relative to income. Much of the increase in funding has been targeted at groups of students who historically lagged behind in achievement: low income, disabled and English Language Learners.

The result of this investment has fulfilled another mandate of the state constitution: to “provide for intellectual, educational, vocational and scientific improvement through a system of public schools.” The high school graduation rate for Kansans has doubled since the 1960s and college completion has more than tripled. New opportunities have opened up for students with disabilities, women and minorities. The use of technology has expanded. We have made substantial progress in narrowing the achievement gap among student groups.

Kansas is a leader not just regionally but nationally in educational attainment. Our students score in the top 10 on national reading and math tests and preparation for college. Kansas ranks in the top 15 on high school completion and adult education levels. These results are critical at a time when higher educational levels equal higher incomes, less unemployment and lower poverty. Our high national ranking has been achieved by consistently spending slightly below the national average per pupil: top 10 results are at below average cost.

We believe Kansas can maintain this record if we continue to support K-12 education at historical levels compared to income. As a result, we are deeply concerned about proposals to use improving state revenues to simply limit future revenues. We urge this committee to add to the Governor's budget for K-12 funding in the key areas we identified.

We believe the people of Kansas have been right in the decades of strong support they have given to their public schools. We do not believe the people of Kansas today support reducing the state's role in funding that system, and transferring the burden to local revenues. We do not believe Kansas can compete for high skill, high wage job creation if we reduce our commitment to education.

Thank you for your consideration.