



Making public schools great for every child

KANSAS NATIONAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION / 715 SW 10TH AVENUE / TOPEKA, KANSAS 66612-1686

Mark Desetti
Senate Committee on Education
March 7, 2012

Madame Chair, Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today in support of Senate Bill 450.

You have already examined two school finance plans. One – SB 361 – would dramatically overhaul the school finance formula and turn responsibility over to local communities for future funding increases. This plan institutionalizes the cuts that have been made to school funding as a result of the budget difficulties the Legislature has had to address in 2008.

The second plan – SB 350 – preserves the current formula and sets in motion a series of funding increases intended to restore the cuts.

We came before this committee in opposition to SB 361 and in support of SB 350. We come here today as a proponent of this new plan in SB 450.

We base this belief on the fundamental principle that responsibility for school funding rests primarily with the state and that local communities should be active partners in providing for excellent schools. We believe in a formula that takes into account student needs and local ability to raise funds. The current formula does that through weightings and equalization formulas.

This bill differs from SB 350 in that it allows some additional local authority without completely turning responsibility for finance over to local communities.

The best approach to school finance for the near future in our view is to return to the formula of 2005-06 and restore the cuts made over the last few years. We believe that if you do, the formula will work.

While SB 450 does not take school funding back to the levels promised back then, it represents a responsible move in the right direction. It restores some of the lost ground due to state budget cuts and allows local districts some additional authority to make up some of the loss. We also appreciate the fact that this local authority is subject to equalization aid which we believe is critical to maintaining equity in the formula.

Our only concern is perhaps more a concern to carry to the Ways and Means Committee than to this one as it deals with the appropriation of money for equalization aid. As you know, in recent years equalization aid has had to be pro-rated as the appropriation of money was insufficient to meet the statutory equalization level. We would urge this committee to do all you can to ensure that the appropriation meets the need when it comes to LOB equalization aid.

I can't say that Senate Bill 450 is perfect. It will take years to restore the cuts and bring school funding back to the levels called for in the Legislative cost studies. But Senate Bill 450 is a responsible approach to moving Kansas back to the intent of the 2006 Legislature.

We urge this committee to approve Senate Bill 450.

Don Ed
3-7-12
Attach 10