

Re: HB 2289

Madame Chair, members of the House Education Committee,

Our system is BROKE! The last thing we need is more Federal review, testing or mandates from an entity that can't provide budgets, leadership or follow our constitution is not a position to follow from. We need to fix "OUR" schools and make the necessary changes we need at the State level to make significant strides at improving "OUR" educational system.

Graduation rates are a fundamental indicator of whether or not the nation's public school system is doing what it is intended to do: enroll, engage, and educate youth to be productive members of society. Since almost 90 percent of the fastest-growing and highest-paying jobs require some postsecondary education, having a high school diploma and the skills to succeed in college and the workplace are essential. Yet nationally, one-third of those students—about 1.3 million each year—leave high school without a diploma, at a high cost to themselves and society at large. Unacceptably low graduation rates, particularly among poor and minority students, have been obscured for far too long by inaccurate data, calculations, and reporting, and inadequate accountability systems at the state and federal levels.

It is well-documented when it comes to the earnings gap between high school graduates and dropouts—an annual difference of at least \$10,000. There is also a growing challenge for individuals with only a high school diploma to find stable, well-paying jobs. The costs of dropping out are born not just by individuals, but by the communities in which they live, and the rest of society. The potential economic benefit of improving students' academic outcomes should be a wake-up call to the importance of reforming America's high schools and ours. Dropout from the class of 2008 will cost Kansas almost \$2.6 billion in lost wages over their lifetimes.

We need to recognize that we are not getting the "TRUE" picture of the dropout rates. An example of the miss reporting of 2008: Our State showed - State-reported for NCLB: 90%, \* U.S. Dept. of Education: 78%, Education Week: 75%. So we end up with a 15% gap difference between state and independent sources.

Huffington Post reported on 11/26/12 Department of Education Graduation rates by State. #1 Iowa 88%, #2 Wisconsin/Vermont 87%, #3 Indiana/Nebraska/New Hampshire/North Dakota/Tennessee/Texas were at 86%. Kansas was tied with other State being shown at 83%.

With 470,000 children in our public schools this number reflects a significant problem not only to our society but our school system. Until such time that we are willing to place SERIOUS, NEUTRAL, oversight options on our public schools we are going to continue to fail our children. Until the Schools are forced to incorporate parental and student needs and desires, as well as input from our local College's for developing "OUR" desired standards, we will continue to produce inadequate students for the work market and upper education.

We have been in the education business in Kansas for more than 150 years now, so I think we have a clear understanding of how the process works. We also have a clear understanding of how this

Federal government intends to run also. As a parent (3-boys, a stepson, and 1 girl), citizen and business owner I have as much experience within the system as anybody in this room. We have to quit patting each other on the back as many here have done and quit asking the teachers and administrators how they "perceive" their own job performances and start asking the taxpayer - that is being buried in tax rolls, to provide a survey of services rendered. Then we can start talking about job performances top to bottom.

You can continue to try and convince yourself that the system is working, when it's not! You can talk to teachers, administrators and others in the system, but until we actually have a system in place that places the parents and children front and center, provide true neutral oversight in manner that allows them to be scrutinized and way to follow the money our education issues will continue to decline.

Respectfully Submitted,

Chris Brown