

KANSAS
ASSOCIATION



OF
SCHOOL
BOARDS

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Testimony before the
Senate Committee on Education
on
SB 224 – School Finance Weightings

by
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Mr. Chairman, Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on **SB 224**. As we understand the bill, it would eliminate the virtual, non-proficient, bilingual, and vocational weightings. It would then require at-risk weighting be prorated at a level required to maintain the base state aid per pupil amount at \$4,492. KASB opposes this bill for the following reasons.

The KASB “First in Education” plans to make Kansas the highest-achieving state in student college and career-ready outcomes contains the following position: “We believe the school finance system should provide additional funding through weightings or other mechanisms for higher costs students, districts and programs, particularly those required by the state.”

SB 224 would eliminate or reduce several weightings which we believe are required to meet both state performance standards under the Kansas Department of Education’s No Child Left Behind waiver and the Governor’s goal of increasing fourth grade reading and college and career-readiness, specifically including vocational, bilingual and at-risk funding.

KASB’s position also specifically supports measures to fund at-risk programs in addition to income measures such as free lunch. The only current additional measure, non-proficient weighting, is eliminated by this bill.

The bilingual and at-risk weightings eliminated or prorated by this bill were established by the Legislature following the Legislative Post Audit cost studies. We are not aware of any new studies that would provide a rational educational reason for making these changes, which we suggest would be a major concern of the courts. It should be a concern of the Legislature regardless of the courts.

Eliminating certain weightings and prorating the largest weighting factor (at-risk) will tend to shift state funding away from districts with larger numbers of students that studies indicate have greater needs and higher costs. We believe this will tend to reduce achievement among these students and districts, and cause a decline in the relative position of educational achievement in Kansas compared to other state and national, rather than help us improve. Furthermore, the elimination of vocational weighting will hinder efforts to strengthen career technical education programs. We do not believe changes should be made in vocational funding until the State Board has completed its study.

Finally, we believe that if significant changes are made in the formula, districts should be “held harmless” against reductions in funding as a result of shifting dollars instead of adding new dollars.

Thank you for your consideration.

Senate Education Committee

Date 3-12-13

Attachment 7