

Testimony before the
House Committee on K-12 Education Budget
on
HB 2347
By

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Mr. Chairman and members of the committee:

Thank you for your time and consideration on this bill. As you have seen and heard, USA-Kansas and KSSA outlined a framework for a new school finance formula; our proposal was developed on six key principles. Upon reviewing HB2347, it is clear the bill fails to meet four of our six principles. The bill also appears more difficult to understand than the previous funding formula utilized by the state prior to the Block Grant Program.

It would appear the base funding mechanism of HB2347 has a fundamental problem. On page 4, lines 3-10 explain how school districts would receive the majority of their funding. For example, a school district with an enrollment of 399 students would receive \$3,387,510, while a district with 400 students would receive \$2,907,600. One additional student would cost the district \$479,910. In another example, a district with 999 students would receive \$7,291,731, while a district with 1000 students would receive \$6,137,000. That one student would cost the district \$1,112,731. The district would have to add over 100 students to receive the same base funding as a district with 999 students.

Every school district encourages and emphasizes the importance of attending school each day the doors are open. The reality is, it is a rare occurrence when students are able to attend every day. Between family situations, illnesses, and other unforeseen issues, it seldom happens that a student is able to attend every day. An enrollment count based on average daily attendance puts certain schools and districts at a considerable disadvantage. Ultimately, it is a student's and/or a parent's decision as to whether or not a student attends school. Counting students in this manner, I believe, only creates greater funding inequities, thus, not meeting constitutional requirements.

A substantial portion of this funding bill is grounded in the premise of teacher and student performance. The reality is, every situation is unique and often out of the control of the school and teacher. Although the skills of a teacher are extremely important to the success of the students in a classroom, there are a multitude of environmental and emotional variables which

affect students within a teacher's classroom. A classroom with a disruptive student, special needs student(s), illness or attendance issues, technology, the room configuration, or multiple outside factors can affect the learning and pace for a classroom of learners. Many feel it is easy to identify a great teacher, but creating a single tool which measures a teacher's effectiveness across a school district would be extremely difficult, if not impossible.

This bill also discusses funding based on assessment results and post-secondary student behavior. It is our belief there are a number of variables which would need to be resolved before either of these funding mechanisms are to be successfully implemented. There have been a number of conversations about assessment scores; however, the reality of today's educational system is there are so many expectations that have been placed on schools over the last 30 years, that trying to implement a single assessment once a year provides an extremely small view of what truly happens in a school on a daily basis. With the influx of social and emotional awareness, career and technical programming, technology competency, social media support, increasing special education needs, cultural training, and a host of other factors that impact today's schools, the academic curriculum is only part of the bigger picture. Right or wrong, it is what society has created.

School districts need a predictable funding source that has the flexibility to meet the individual needs identified by a community based board of education, along with meeting the accountability expectations outlined by the Kansas Department of Education.