



MEADE

Unified School District #226
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May 18, 2017

To: Senate Select Committee on School Finance

Re: Senate Bill 251

Mr. Chairman and Committee Members:

First of all I appreciate the opportunity to address the committee regarding Senate Bill 251. Secondly, I would like to introduce myself. My name is Kenneth Harshberger. I am a lifelong farmer from southwest Kansas, and have been a teacher, principal, and superintendent for 36 years. Currently I am the superintendent in Meade USD 226.

I am testifying neutral on this bill because it has policies which will be beneficial to school districts, but the bill also contains areas of concerns I would encourage the committee to consider as this new school finance bill is finalized.

➤ **The structure of the finance plan has many new pieces which will be advantages to districts compared to the old formula prior to the block grant.**

- Funding for all day kindergarten
- Increased funding for preschool
- Studying CTE weighting to determine costs for programs
- Using a prior year count to help with budget certainty for both the legislature and school districts
- Allowing districts to keep a 33% LOB or to increase the LOB by a local board resolution with a protest petition
- Continuing to keep most of the previous weightings especially low/high enrollment weighting to protect schools
- Reinstating funding for Professional Development and Mentoring
- The Local Enhancement Budget - benefiting a number of districts if equalized and equitable
- Allowing more flexibility for capital outlay expenditures and the possibility of increasing the mill levy
- Increasing the base aid for students

➤ **The concerns I have about this legislation are presented for consideration to improve the finance formula.**

- While the funding has increased, the base funding is still below the 2008-09 level of \$4,400 and is expected to be only \$4,317 by the 5th year of implementation. We have eliminated dozens of positions in our district and several programs, some of which would be restored to benefit students if the funding was at a higher level than currently proposed.
- Adding more funding to the base benefits all students in all districts, so I would encourage that weightings not be increased in areas that might not benefit all students across the state. I support more funding being added to the base.
- The mandate to require a certain type of special education is concerning since these decisions are made best by a team of Spec. Ed. teachers, principals, psychologists, regular ed. teachers, other specialist, and parents.
- Since the bill does not have a ***hold-harmless provision*** for the foundation budget or the LOB (LFB), around 30% of the schools in the state lose money overnight. Some lose very little, but there are small districts which lose several \$100,000 and some larger districts which lose millions. This gives districts almost no time to plan for such huge cuts. Superintendents know this is primarily due to decreased enrollment. However, a one year hold-harmless provision would allow districts to make cuts over a year, and if an increase is put in place the following year, the impact wouldn't be so staggering. I would encourage the committee to consider adding this type of provision.

Again, thank you for this opportunity to share my testimony. I appreciate your consideration of these thoughts. If you have any questions, I would be happy to visit with any of you.

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