



**Senate Select Committee on Education Finance  
Senator Jim Denning, Chair**

**Testimony on SB 251 - May 19, 2017**

The Kansas City, Kansas Public Schools (KCKPS) is testifying in opposition to Senate Bill 251, which creates the Kansas School Equity and Enhancement Act. We have deep concerns about whether this bill, in its current form, will meet the equity and adequacy requirements of the Kansas Constitution, and worry that any bill that fails to meet both of these tests will put in jeopardy the work school districts **must** do during the summer, to be ready for students in August.

There are several components of the legislation currently being considered that risk running afoul of the *Gannon* requirement for equity, that "...school districts must have reasonably equal access to substantially similar educational opportunity through similar tax effort." Even with equalization, districts with high assessed valuation have access to substantially more property tax revenue than property-poor districts. Expanding the maximum capital outlay levy to ten mills widens the gap between districts of dissimilar property wealth, and thus runs afoul of the Kansas Constitution. We are pleased to note that another unconstitutional provision contained in HB 2410, the Local Excellence Budget, is not included in the Senate bill. Districts with high numbers of low income students would have no access to these funds, further disadvantaging those districts as they strive for excellence for all students.

KCKPS also believes that the funding provisions of SB 251 fall unconstitutionally short of the adequacy requirements of the Kansas Constitution. After two years of Block Grants, which froze funding at levels inadequate to meet the needs of the more than 460,000 Kansas school children, the district believe that the base should be increased to \$4604 in FY 18 and \$5090 in FY 19 as recommended by the State Board of Education. This would provide districts with the resources necessary to meet the Kansans Can outcomes, and the workforce needs that form the basis for a healthy Kansas economy.

KCKPS is pleased that SB 251 creates a formula which continues to be efficient, by tying funding directly to the needs of the students that a district serves. Every student needs sufficient resources in order to be educated well; at the same time, some students require additional resources, in order to receive a quality education. Students who are English Language learners, for example, who need to learn English at the same time as they learn everything else that other students learn, require additional resources. Students who suffer from the devastating impacts of living in poverty require additional resources. Students who live far from school, or who live in neighborhoods where walking to school is either challenging or dangerous, require additional resources. We are pleased that the proposed formula is responsive to those and other needs of children, and ties funding directly to those needs.

Other aspects of SB 251 that merit recognition include the provision of an annual increase in foundation aid, based on the Midwest Consumer Price Index; provisions for full-day kindergarten and additional four-year old At-Risk slots; and money for professional development and mentoring. We do hope the committee will consider adopting the House position on weighting for At-Risk students, which is based on a legislative cost study. Most importantly, the district urges the legislature to adopt a constitutionally adequate and equitable funding formula quickly, so that the school districts in Kansas can continue the work of preparing students for college and careers. Thank you for your consideration of this testimony.