

Testimony on HB 2403
By
Dr. George Griffith, Superintendent USD No. 208

Honorable Chair Representative Ryckman and members of the House Appropriations Committee, I would like to thank you for the opportunity to share testimony in opposition to HB 2403. There are a number of reasons for my district's opposition to this bill and here are just a few:

1. HB 2403 does not provide for the needs of all students as does the current formula which is not broken and clearly not more complicated than HB 2403.

The current formula may be old but math hasn't changed and it also has been adjusted to meet the needs of our children as the impact of special circumstances are identified. These special circumstances are based on empirically based research with just one example being the research around the unique needs of children from poverty. The needs result in additional costs that HB 2403 does not provide for.

2. HB 2403 does not provide for adequate equalization of the LOB or Capital Outlay funds to meet the needs of districts with increasing levels of poverty.

The current formula provides for equalization of these two funds that may not be perfect but HB 2403 reduces the level of assistance provided by the current formula. With the 2014 Montoy ruling, I question how this can be constitutional and feel it will likely result in more litigation not less and is an attempted delay to the Gannon Case.

3. HB 2403 claims it provides over \$300 million more to education; however, my district is still over \$370,000 short from what we would have received based on the 2009 BSAPP.

Of the increase funding provided in HB 2403, \$171 million is going to pay back many KPERS payments that were not paid on time. Although I appreciate having a stable retirement fund, the repayment of the KPERS fund is a late payment from the past years and should be credited as such. The \$129 million new money for capital outlay and LOB equalization has no impact on my district leaving my district short and all of our children deserve better.

4. HB 2403 New Section 4 §(c) (1) - (4) provides guidance for a new formula that currently is in the funding formula. As to §(c) (2), increasing the amount going to the classroom, the current amount depends on what is determined to be needed for instruction. This bill does not define these costs which are subject to debate.

The funds that need to be discussed are those going for school counselors, library staff, school nurses, administrators, curriculum directors, custodial staff, utilities, and technology directors which are not currently counted as part of the classroom expenses. All of these areas should be included as part of instruction because a school cannot educate children without them.

5. HB 2403 does not take into account the current financial situation of the state. Based on recent history and money likely needing to be cut, it will most likely come out of the instructional funds and not the KPERS fund due to the unfunded liability KPERS faces. This would result in more money taken from instruction which is where my district already has been severely cut.

KPERS money should not be included in the general fund since it will be too easy for the state to have money for any KPERS' increased cost to be taken from the total of funds that will not necessarily increase as needed to cover the KPERS payments.

The only issue with the current formula is the lack of funding and changing to a formula equally confusing is only beneficial as an attempt to delay a court ruling on school finance. I urge you to vote no on HB 2403. Apply the same funds to the current formula if you do not wish to meet the current financial needs of districts. Thanks for the opportunity to express my opposition to HB 2403.

Respectfully,

Dr. George Griffith, Superintendent USD #208