

Testimony before the
House Appropriations Committee
in opposition to
House Bill 2403 – Repealing School Finance Formula for Block Grant
by
Judith Deedy, Executive Director of **Game On for Kansas Schools**
grassroots advocacy organization, 501c4

March 9, 2015

Mr. Chair, Members of the Committee:

[Game on for Kansas Schools](#) is a nonpartisan grassroots effort among Kansans who share a belief in high-quality public education as a right of all Kansas students. We advocate for Kansas public schools to ensure our teachers, principals, superintendents, and school board members all have the resources necessary to deliver quality education to all Kansas students. We inform the community about issues and legislation affecting students in Kansas. The Game On leadership team currently includes over 30 members, representing the spectrum of education stakeholders (parents, educators, and other community advocates), with children attending more than 25 different Kansas public schools. We are nonpartisan and welcome anyone interested in protecting Kansas public education. Our efforts include raising awareness, evaluating policy, accountability, public discourse, and contributing solutions where real problems exist.

We oppose House Bill 2403 on multiple grounds. This bill does not help Kansas schools meet the needs of Kansas students better than the current formula. It fails to account for rising costs over which districts have no control. It fails to account for changes in numbers of students or changes in demographics within districts. Under such circumstances, “steady” funding is a functional cut. The “extraordinary need” clause will not be sufficient to meet the needs of all the districts (and therefore, students) that will need it.

We question how this bill, which appears to achieve much of its savings through cuts in equalization aid, will be deemed to meet the requirements of the Gannon equity decision issued last year. We note that many legislators in the House took credit for that increase when campaigning last year, but now appear to be backing away from it. Also, supporters of this bill have said it increases flexibility for districts in how they choose to allocate resources. However, increasing flexibility without providing sufficient resources merely grants districts the responsibility for choosing among bad options.

We are deeply concerned that this bill repeals the current formula and contains no sunset provision for the block grant proposal. The current funding formula has been deemed sufficient by the Kansas courts; the level of funding has been the issue. This bill does not tweak the current formula, but abandons it without offering a suitable replacement.

We urge you to oppose House Bill 2403.

Respectfully submitted,

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