

Testimony before the
House Committee on Education
Opposed to HB2596 – Creating the classroom-based funding act

by
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grassroots public education advocacy organization, 501c4

February 16, 2016

Mr. Chair, Members of the Committee:

I am here today as a parent of public school students and as a member of the Game On for Kansas Schools leadership team. I appreciate the opportunity to testify on the “classroom-based funding act” and to explain our opposition to House Bill 2596.

[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 group currently includes over 15 members, representing the spectrum of education stakeholders (parents, educators, and other community advocates), and our team extends statewide.

Our concerns with this bill are as follows:

- 1) The bill, as written, lacks input from education professionals, parents of students, and other public school stakeholders. Education is the core function of our State, and input from Kansans impacted by this formula is necessary to ensure the needs of our children and community schools are met.
- 2) The audits of classroom costs are not focused on *efficacy* of the education received therein, nor does it appear to take into consideration the varying needs individual students present, imposing a one size “fits all” formula, when we know Kansas kids come to school with different needs and foundations for success.
- 3) The bill appears to cement a tax credit scholarship voucher-type program into the Kansas education funding formula. Game On opposes any formula that allows for public tax dollars to go to private schools that do not have:
 - a. the same prohibitions against excluding children that public schools have,
 - b. do not have the same accountability as public schools,
 - c. and weaken public schools further with the misdirection of funds that would otherwise pay for needed public education programs.
- 4) We oppose the bill’s prohibitions of school boards advocating on behalf of their students and community: “No school district shall expend, use, or transfer money from the general fund of district for the purpose of engaging in or supporting in any manner any litigation by the school district any person, assoc., corp., or entity, against the state of Kansas...” (p. 24). This clause is a retaliatory and a direct rebuke to the school districts advocating on behalf of their students’ rights under our state constitution for an adequate and equitable education in court, and we find such a clause to be an attempt by the legislature to skirt responsibility for its constitutional obligations.

As parents, we want education experts participating and guiding the creation of our education funding formula. It seems relevant and necessary that the creation of a school finance formula involve the active participation of key education stakeholders. Denying them a seat at the table during the drafting of this bill, eliminates any opportunity for vetting, rigor, and knowledge based on experience.

We ask that *efficacy* be the guiding star as the formula is drafted, relying on what work’s best for our children, not the guise of efficiency that asks what can our children further sacrifice.

We echo PTA's request that actual costs drive the process, rather than allocation be driven by the amount of funds available to the state. We must ensure that equity and adequacy are not simply words, but are standards of merit, that allow every child to be greeted at the school house door by professionals who can provide them a solid education foundation, regardless of their physical abilities, their religious background, or their financial means.

As a final note, we would like to state that most of our peers don't consider testifying before committees in the legislature as part of their normal activities. Game On is testifying, but the over 9150 people who follow us on Facebook have not traveled to Topeka today, though they commonly share our views.

Again we assert, Game On members are first and foremost, parents. We are here today to stand up on behalf of the children we love, in our homes, and across our State, and in opposition to this bill.

Respectfully submitted,

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