

MINUTES OF THE SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Steve Abrams at 1:30 pm on Tuesday, March 08, 2016, 144-S of the Capitol.

All members were present except:

Senator Anthony Hensley – Excused  
Senator Jeff Melcher – Excused

Committee staff present:

Steven Wu, Legislative Research Department  
Jason Long, Office of Revisor of Statutes  
Lauren Douglass, Legislative Research Department  
Erna Fabert, Kansas Legislative Committee Assistant

Conferees appearing before the Committee:

Scott Plummer  
Suzanne Dennis, Chair, Kansas Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing  
Sandra Kelley, Deaf Cultural Center  
Ann Cooper  
Kim Anderson  
Terry Collins, Kansas Association of Special Education Administrators (KASEA)  
Madeleine Burkindine, Superintendent, School for the Deaf  
Ken Willard, Kansas State Board of Education

Others in attendance:

[See Attached List](#)

**Hearing continuation on: SB444 — Creating a language assessment program for children who are deaf or hard of hearing.**

Chairperson Abrams opened the continuation of the hearing on **SB444** by explaining committee rules to conferees.

Senator Kerschen called for a point of personal privilege to introduce several pages from his district who attend Goddard High School.

Scott Plummer spoke in support, pointing out that deaf or hard of hearing patients are in jeopardy if they cannot express themselves to hospital staff, which was the case with his own grandfather. He also shared statistics outlining additional costs for services to persons who are developmentally delayed due to lack of language skills. ([Attachment 1](#))

Suzanne Dennis testified in support stating that students who have equal access to all language modalities suffer less intellectual, social and emotional development problems, translating into less

## CONTINUATION SHEET

MINUTES of the Committee on Education at 1:30 pm on Tuesday, March 08, 2016 in Room 144-S of the Capitol.

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funds spent on mental health services, vocational services and dependence on welfare. ([Attachment 2](#))

Sandra Kelley spoke in support, stating that assessment tools provide a measurement of data and statistics for objective information rather than assumptions and guess work. ([Attachment 3](#))

Ann Cooper spoke in support emphasizing this bill is greatly needed because in her role as the current President of the Kansas Association of the Deaf (KAD), she is in contact with persons who struggle because they did not learn basic language skills as children. ([Attachment 4](#))

Kim Anderson spoke in support as she would like to see a reduction in the high numbers of unemployment, illiteracy and dependency on government benefits among deaf and hard of hearing people which can be accomplished by providing them with language skills from an early age. ([Attachment 5](#))

Terry Collins spoke in opposition, stating that this bill appears to limit students from using a variety of other communication methods that are not limited to just ASL and English and he is concerned about the unfunded mandates that are currently contained in its language. ([Attachment 6](#))

Madeleine Burkindine provided neutral oral testimony, stating that the Kansas School for the Deaf is under the supervision of the State Board of Education and asked that this bill be tabled and the issue referred to that Board for resolution. ([Attachment 7](#))

Ken Willard provided neutral oral testimony, recommending that the matter be referred to the State Board of Education where interested parties can come to agreement and bring recommendations back to the Legislature next year. ([Attachment 8](#))

Questions followed mainly in the areas of timing, statistical information currently available on language delays in deaf and hearing impaired children, representation on the advisory committee, amendments currently being worked on, the absolute need for more data on language assessment, how the data gathered will help and improve ability to educate deaf children, and whether a new law is even needed to accomplish these goals.

There being no further conferees or questions, the continuation of the hearing on **SB444** was closed.

Chairperson Abrams adjourned the meeting at 2:20 pm.

The next meeting of the Senate Education Committee will be on Wednesday, March 9, 2016 at 1:30 pm in Room 144-S of the Capitol.