

MINUTES OF THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

The meeting was called to order by SENATOR JOSEPH C. HARDER at
Chairperson

1:30 XX/p.m. on Tuesday, March 26, 1991 in room 123-S of the Capitol.

All members were present except:

Committee staff present:

Mr. Ben Barrett, Legislative Research Department
Ms. Avis Swartzman, Revisor of Statutes
Mr. Dale Dennis, Assistant Commissioner of Education
Mrs. Millie Randell, Committee Secretary

Conferees appearing before the committee:

SB 307 - Investment of idle funds by Kansas private colleges.

Proponents:

Mr. Bill Wagon, Education Liaison, Governor's office
Dr. Bob Kelly, Executive Director, Kansas Independent College Association

HB 2208 - Instruction in Braille reading and writing to blind students.

Proponents:

Representative Dick Edlund, sponsor
Ms. Susan L. Stanzel, President, National Federation of the Blind of Kansas
Mr. Ralph E. Bartley, Superintendent, Kansas State School for the visually Handicapped, Kansas City
Mr. Larry E. Waymire, 2nd Vice President, National Federation of the Blind of Kansas; Vice President, N.F.B. of Kansas, Capitol Chapter; Secretary, State Committee of Blind Vendors
Mr. Jeff Balek, 3rd grade student, Berryton Elementary School, USD 450, Shawnee County
Mr. Glen Yancey, Acting Commissioner, Rehabilitation Services, SRS
Ms. Brilla Highfill Scott, Associate Executive Director, United School Administrators of Kansas
Ms. Cindy Lou Hallenbeck, an organ performance student at the University of Kansas
Mr. Tom Balek, National Secretary, Parents of Blind Children, a division of the National Federation of the Blind
Ms. Madeleine Burkindine, Kansas State School for the Visually Handicapped's Teacher Association (written testimony only)
Mr. James Canady (written testimony only)
Mr. Robert L. Tabor, member, National Federation of the blind (written testimony only)

SB 307 - Investment of idle funds by Kansas private colleges.

Chairman Joseph C. Harder called the meeting to order and announced that the Committee would hear SB 307, relating to investment of idle funds. He recognized the first proponent, Mr. Bill Wagon, Education Liaison for the Governor's office.

Mr. Wagon explained that SB 307 was drafted at the request of Governor Finney as "a method whereby the (private) colleges could gain additional revenue". (Attachment 1)

The Chair next recognized Dr. Bob Kelly, Executive Director of the Kansas Independent College Association. Dr. Kelly stated that although no college of his association is unhappy with its present investment opportunities, he is supportive of SB 307, as it provides an option if investment problems should occur. (Attachment 2) Dr. Kelly explained that other than the endowment fund, the bill primarily could provide an additional option for short term investment of funds received from first semester tuition.

Following a call for additional conferees, the Chairman announced that

Unless specifically noted, the individual remarks recorded herein have not been transcribed verbatim. Individual remarks as reported herein have not been submitted to the individuals appearing before the committee for editing or corrections.

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the hearing on SB 307 was concluded and that the bill would be taken under advisement.

HB 2208 - Instruction in Braille reading and writing to blind students.

The Chair directed Committee attention to HB 2208, relating to Braille instruction, and called upon Representative Dick Edlund, sponsor of HB 2208.

Representative Edlund explained that the National Federation of the Blind, with which he is associated, has been promoting Braille instruction for the blind. He said many states have adopted legislation similar to HB 2208, and he expects more states to follow. He emphasized how critical it is for blind people to receive an education, with the basic education being Braille. Representative Edlund explained that HB 2208, which establishes statewide standards for Braille instruction in reading and writing and establishes a consistent statewide standard for teachers of Braille, originated as a result of suits filed in other states whereby schools refused to teach Braille to students who still had some sight left. He pointed out that HB 2208 does not contain a fiscal note and urged the Committee to recommend HB 2208 favorably.

Replying to a question, Representative Edlund said that due to the reluctance of some parents for their children to learn Braille, he would like to see the instruction of Braille mandated; as parents are involved when drawing up an I.E.P. (Individual Education Plan) for a student, and this would make it easier on the school system.

The Chair recognized Ms. Susan Stanzel, president of the National Federation of the Blind of Kansas. Ms. Stanzel, reading Braille, urged passage of HB 2208, because "blind job seekers need to be better equipped than the average sighted job seeker to even stand a chance". (Attachment 3)

Mr. Ralph Bartley, superintendent of the Kansas State School for the Visually Handicapped, stated that he wished to be recorded that he has reviewed HB 2208 and that he was requested by the Division of the Budget to prepare a fiscal impact statement. He said he would not request, either this year or in future years, any additional state appropriations to fund this bill. Superintendent Bartley noted the impact of Sec. 4 of HB 2088 which instructs the State Department of Education to adopt standards which are consistent with the standards adopted by the National Library Services for the Blind and Physically Handicapped. Mr. Bartley pointed out that all teaching standards are not the same. (Attachment 4) Referring to his written testimony, Mr. Bartley pointed out that it was done by a special Braille printer at his school which is the only "type of its kind" in the world which prints both Braille and normal wording simultaneously.

Replying to a question, Mr. Bartley said that there are no Kansas colleges or universities which offer teacher preparation programs relating to teaching or working with the blind.

Mr. Larry Waymire, a blind native Kansan and a representative of several blind organizations, stated that there is a need for HB 2208. He described a case in Topeka where a visually impaired person is being denied the opportunity to learn Braille skills because of some residual eyesight of the individual. (Attachment 5)

The Chair welcomed to the Committee Mr. Jeff Balek, a blind student who is enrolled in the third grade class at Berryton Elementary School in the Shawnee Heights School District, Topeka. Jeff said that he does all the things other students do, such as read, play games, etc., except that he uses Braille. He said that he learned to read Braille before he started school. Reading Braille, Jeff recited a poem, "Hands". (Attachment 6)

Mr. Glen Yancey, Acting Commissioner, Rehabilitation Services, SRS, recounted the many "What if?" situations that could have been changed had

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those individuals been given the opportunity to learn Braille skills at an early age. (Attachment 7)

Ms. Brilla Highfill Scott, Associate Executive Director, United School Administrators of Kansas, noting the previous testimony of conferees, urged passage of HB 2208. (Attachment 8)

Ms. Cindy Lou Hallenbeck, a totally blind person since birth, pointed out the importance of learning Braille skills in her testimony found in Attachment 9.

Mr. Tom Balek, National Secretary of Parents of Blind Children, a division of the National Federation of the Blind, requested to be heard. Mr. Balek stated that he has contact with parents all over the country who are fighting to get Braille education for their children. He explained that there is no problem in instances when the children are totally blind. He said he feels strongly that HB 2208 should be passed not only in Kansas but in every state in the country. He said he did not view this as a cost issue, because "the teachers are already there".

Ms. Keri Ann Ruemmler, Olathe, a young student whose family is deaf and whose already bad eyesight is becoming worse, was introduced to the Committee. A spokesperson said Ms. Ruemmler plans to voluntarily commence learning Braille next summer, for, as testimony has indicated, it is important to learn Braille at as early an age as possible.

After calling for additional conferees, the Chair announced that the hearing on HB 2208 was concluded. He called attention to written testimony that had been submitted by: Ms. Madeleine Burkindine, representing the Kansas State School for the Visually Handicapped's Teacher Association, Attachment 10; Mr. James Canady, Attachment 11; and Mr. Robert L. Tabor, a member of the National Federation of the Blind of Kansas, Attachment 12.

Superintendent Bartley, replying to a question, confirmed that there are isolated cases of public school instruction of Braille in Kansas. Mr. Bartley also responded that Kansas' teachers of visually impaired students, in order to be certificated in Kansas, are required to be trained to teach both partially sighted and totally blind children. He said that he recruits teachers from all over the United States, and there are approximately 25 teachers at the Kansas State School for the Visually Handicapped and, at last count, there were 26.7 in the local school districts. He said our problem is getting teachers, since Kansas does not have a teacher preparation program. Mr. Bartley further responded that he knows uncertificated but qualified people who could teach Braille. The Chairman said he would be glad to work with Mr. Bartley in obtaining alternative certification for these prospective teachers.

When the Chair asked the Committee's pleasure regarding HB 2208, Senator Montgomery moved, and Senator Allen seconded the motion to recommend HB 2208 favorably for passage.

Although Committee discussion indicated that Representative Edlund, sponsor of HB 2208, felt that publication in the Kansas Register would implement sooner the provisions of the bill, Committee discussion indicated that the program could not be implemented much sooner than publication in the Kansas statutes and would cost an additional \$3,000.

When the Chair reverted Committee attention to the primary motion to recommend HB 2208 favorably for passage, he announced that the motion had carried.

The Chair called Committee attention to SB 307, which had been heard today, and asked the Committee's pleasure. Senator Frahm moved that SB 307 be

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recommended favorably for passage. Senator Allen offered a substitute motion that SB 307 be recommended favorably for passage and placed on the Consent Calendar. The substitute motion was seconded by Senator Karr, and the motion carried.

When the Chair called for approval of the minutes, Senator Montgomery moved that minutes of the meeting of March 19 be approved. Senator Frahm seconded the motion, and the minutes were approved.

The Chair adjourned the meeting.

SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

TIME: 1:30 p.m. PLACE: 123-S DATE: Tuesday, March 26, 1991

GUEST LIST

<u>NAME</u>	<u>ADDRESS</u>	<u>ORGANIZATION</u>
Chuck Street	Topeka	U.S.A.
Glen Yancey	Topeka	SRS - Rehab. Svcs.
STEPHEN L. BARY	K.C. KS	NFB
DIANA L. WEBB	K.C. KS	NFB
DON MORRIS	MARYLAND	NFB
Dick Edlund	KC KS	NFB
Eileen Edlund	KC KS	NFB
Susan Stempel	Leawood, Ks.	NFB of Ks.
Ralph Bartley	KC KS	KSSVAH
Cindy Hallabek	Lawrence, Ks.	NFB of Ks.
Anon Burnett	Topeka	U.S.D. 501
Debbie Apte	Topeka	USD 500
Jill Debock	Topeka	PMFB
Sally Thompson	SOBL	St. Treasurer
Montgomery	PER	KSSUIT
Connie Hulseell	Topeka	St. Bd of Ed.
Tom Emerit	Independence	St Bd of Ed
Bill Wagoner	Illinois office	
Jeff Debruffenreid	Topeka	B Valley
Jim Yanally	Overland Park	USD #312
Bernie Koch	Wichita	Wichita Chamber of Commerce
Bob Kelly	Topeka	KICA
Jim May	"	KBA

SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

TIME: 1:30 p.m. PLACE: 123-S DATE: Tuesday, March 26, 1991

GUEST LIST

NAME	ADDRESS	ORGANIZATION
Jacque Oakes	Topeka	SOE
MARK TULLMAN	TOPEKA	KASB
Robin Nichols	Wichita	USO 259
Jim Niny	Topeka	ASAC
Gerald Henderson	Topeka	USA of KS
Bella Highfill Scott	Topeka	USA
Leah D. Lee	Wichita	
Larry E. Wray	Topeka	NFB & S Co BV
Sally A. Ruen	Olathe	
Madeleine L. Burbudine	Leawood	KSSVH Teacher's Association
Kemi - am P Member	Olathe	
Cliff Plummer	Olathe	
Robert Robb Tabor	Lawrence	NFB
Tom and Jeff Bacek	Topeka	NFB
King Collins	Topeka	KN EA

March 26, 1991
Testimony of Bill Wagnon,
Governor's Education Liaison

concerning
SB 307

before the
Senate Education Committee

SB 307 offers one of those rare opportunities when the legislature gets to do something helpful which doesn't create another mandate from Topeka or cost the state treasury anything.

During her campaign, Governor Finney came to appreciate private colleges need more revenue to function and saw from her experiences as State Treasurer with the Pooled Money Investment Board a method whereby the colleges could gain additional revenue. Consequently, she asked that SB 307 be drafted and proposes it for your consideration.

This is the same kind of imaginative policy making the Governor exhibited as Treasurer. She then saw opportunities to extend low cost loans to farmers and small businesses out of discretionary highway funds. She also felt local units of governments should then be able to participate in the pooled money investment system to increase their earnings on idle funds. A variation on her idea has been passed by a committee in the House and will be considered for action soon.

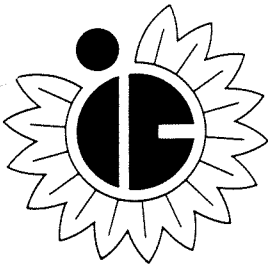
Traditionally, private colleges have maintained an important working relation with the bankers within their community, placing idle funds with them and turning to those same bankers for loans in times of need. SB 307 does not interfere with these practices, but simply offers private colleges another option for investing idle funds at short term rates usually higher than available through local bankers. This option would also provide safeguards for college short term investments that are available to the State of Kansas.

At a time when the prospects for decreasing tuition grant funds for private college students appears probable and at a time when the House is considering creating a comparable pooled money board for local units of governments, enacting SB 307 appears timely and appropriate.

Governor Finney asks for your favorable recommendation to the Senate.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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KANSAS INDEPENDENT COLLEGE ASSOCIATION

Capitol Federal Building, Room 515, Topeka, Kansas 66603

Telephone (913) 235-9877

ROBERT N. KELLY, *Executive Director*

March 26, 1991

Testimony before Senate Education Committee on SB307

Our colleges support SB307 because it provides another investment option that we might use. We appreciate the opportunity that the bill provides us to consider the service and earnings potential offered through investing with the Pooled Money Investment Board, an option that we do not presently have. In particular, we like that participation is voluntary and that each college would negotiate independently.

It must be noted that not one of our colleges is presently unhappy with its investment opportunity. In fact, they are pleased with the services they receive from their local banks. In all candor, therefore, the bill will probably not change the investment strategies we presently pursue. Nonetheless, we are very supportive of the option that SB307 provides if investment problems were to occur in the future.

We request that you recommend SB307 favorably for passage.

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National Federation of the Blind of Kansas, Inc.

Susan L. "Susie" Stanzel, President

11905 Mohawk Lane
Leawood, Kansas 66209-1038
Telephone: 913/339-9341

A publicly supported organization as described in section 501(c)(3) of the IRS code.

HOUSE BILL NO. 2208

TESTIMONY DELIVERED TO THE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

March 26, 1991, by Susan L. Stanzel, President

NATIONAL FEDERATION OF THE BLIND OF KANSAS

My name is Susie Stanzel and I am the president of the National Federation of the Blind of Kansas. I have the honor of succeeding now Representative Richard J. "Dick" Edlund. Before his election to the Kansas State House of Representatives, Representative Edlund devoted much of the past twenty-two years championing for improvements in the lives of blind persons. By introducing House Bill #2208, Representative Edlund has continued his championship for blind persons.

We in the National Federation of the Blind of Kansas are changing what it means to be blind. We urge passage of House Bill #2208. By doing so, you as Legislators will be changing the lives of Kansas blind children. By passage you will be providing the foundation for literacy and opportunities for better education.

When we seek employment as blind persons we must be (or seem) more capable than our sighted peers. The unemployment rate of blind persons is 70%. Of the 30% who do work, 70% are under employed. The State of Illinois Blind Agency commissioned a study (published by The American Foundation for the Blind) to determine what commonalities exist among employed blind persons. The study revealed a correlation between blind people who are both good Braille users and good travelers and employment.

I have been blind all my life. I am fortunate to receive my Braille training at the Kansas State School for the Blind. This began in the first grade and continued during the nine years of my education there. After leaving the blind school at the beginning of my sophomore year things were much different. I had to begin learning to depend on readers and taped material. The good thing was that all my math books were in Braille. It would have been extremely hard to take Algebra using a reader and almost impossible with a tape. I was the first of many blind students to graduate from the Shawnee Mission School System.

After my graduation from high school, I went to Emporia State where I majored in Business with an emphasis in computers. Back in the dark ages, the 60's, there was not a specific degree in computer science. Even though I used tapes and readers for some of my classes, I still relied totally on Braille for my computer classes. Braille was the only way for me to understand the precise way I had to enter information into the computer.

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I have been a Computer Programmer Analyst for the past twenty years. Seventeen have been spent with the United States Department of Agriculture. I write all my instructions in Braille. As with the process of learning programming, I must have the ability to read the material myself. It is easier for me to find specific items and make recommendations when I read the material.

In closing, I strongly support this House Bill #2208. Blind job seekers need to be better equipped than the average sighted job seeker to even stand a chance. Even though sighted people go to book stores and get tapes to read while driving down the road, they do not want to replace printed material with tapes. The same is true of myself. Because I can read some material on tape, I would never give up the use of Braille.

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MEMORANDUM

TO: Joseph Harder, Chairperson, Senate
Education Committee, Sheila Frahm, Vice
Chairperson; Jim Allen; Eugene Anderson;
Gerald Karr; Dave Kerr; Audrey
Langworthy; Don Montgomery; Nancy
Parish; Jack Steinsager; Doug Walker

FROM: Ralph E. Bartley, Superintendent
Kansas State School for the Visually
Handicapped

RE: ~~HB~~ 2208

DATE: March 26, 1991

My name is Ralph E. Bartley, and my
address is 1100 State Avenue, Kansas
City, Kansas. I am a proponent of ~~HB~~
2208.

This bill establishes two important policies
that will benefit Kansas students.

First, the decision to teach braille to students will be
consistent across Kansas, and secondly, the standards

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that Kansas requires of teacher preparation programs will be consistent.

This bill is extremely important to Kansas students because it will have a direct impact on their literacy and on their employment. Students who need braille are definitely "at risk," if they are not instructed at the appropriate time. Teachers of braille, similar to teachers of English or foreign languages, must learn the skills to read, write, and teach the braille code. Standards which are to be adopted by the Kansas State Department of Education would be consistent with the national library services for the blind. This legislation can be implemented by Kansas schools, and in my opinion, many are already subscribing to these standards.

Thank you for the opportunity to present this testimony.

REB: g!

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TESTIMONY

To: Chairperson . JOSEPH HARDER, and Fellow Committee Members

SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Date: March 26, 1991

Regarding: House Bill #2208

From: Larry E. Waymire
A Blind Native Kansan
2nd Vice President, National Federation of the Blind of Kansas
Vice President, N.F.B. of Kansas, Capitol Chapter
Secretary, State Committee of Blind Vendors

I come before you today, on behalf of myself and the above organizations, to ask for and urge your support of HB 2208. It appears to me, the purpose of this bill is to enable any and all blind students who desire braille instruction to receive this vital communication skill. By achieving this purpose many benefits would be realized, not only for blind persons, but for society as a whole. Just a few of the benefits are as follows:

1. Blind students would not be reduced to becoming a part of the demoralized and degraded portion of society, and in the educational system, referred to as "illiterate".

2. By not becoming a member of the illiterate portion of society, blind students/individuals could and would become a more positive and productive force within society.

3. By learning braille skills, blind students would be able to achieve their highest potential more effectively and efficiently. Not only within the educational system, but throughout the rest of their lives.

4. Blind students with braille skills would be better prepared to compete with their sighted peers.

5. Braille skills would greatly reduce stress, anxiety and frustration that a blind student feels when placed in a disadvantageous situation.

6. By providing braille skills to students at an early age, it is very conceivable that this would lessen the need for Voc. Rehab. Services for the individuals whose eyesight worsens with age. This in turn would create benefits:

A. Blind individuals could reduce their time and expense to learn braille skills at a later age.

B. The Voc. Rehab. System could lessen the already stressed caseload being handled, and the number of requests for this particular service.

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C. Kansas Tax Dollars used to teach braille skills later in life, along with time and energy, could be channeled into other badly needed educational programs.

7. Modern technology now makes the task of educating blind students easier and less costly than it once was. With the use of braille printers and other computer adaptations, sighted teachers can generate braille, and blind students can generate print.

It is my belief that in order to more rapidly maximize the benefits of this bill, upon its passage, two very basic philosophies that educators, Voc. Rehab. personnel and parents of blind children/students need to accept are:

1. That even with the use of all the sight utilization equipment and gadgets available, there will never be any guarantee that further vision loss will not occur.

2. That even though a visually impaired student can function adequately at a given point in time, prevention against illiteracy is the best medicine. Emotional stability, social acceptance and contributions to society will all benefit from learning braille skills. Coupled with the fact that totally blind children are born every day, this bill becomes even more imperative to be favorably passed.

Having gone through the public education system being visually impaired and not having braille skills, I personally experienced the following:

1. Longer hours of studying to maintain the same level with my sighted peers.

2. Added physical stress on the eyesight that I had remaining.

3. A harder time in developing social skills due to the longer hours needed to be spent studying.

4. Less time for extra curricular activities due to the longer hours needed to be spent studying.

In the classroom setting I experienced added frustration and anxiety in regards to participating in reading in front of the class. Due to this, development of my oratorical skills suffered.

Since completion of my educational experience, when I have requested braille skills through Voc. Rehab. services, I have heard two very common statements from them:

1. "It is so much harder and costly to teach braille later in life than it would have been if you had learned it at an earlier age."

2. "You have managed without braille skills, so why is there a need to learn them now."

In closing let me say, "let us, the blind, be who we are: blind people." Please, with the help of HB 2208, give us the chance to demonstrate that we are just as good as (and in some cases, better) than our sighted peers, when provided with this necessary tool for success. Ask us not to be sighted, but give us

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the chance to become the best that we can be.

Thank you for your time and consideration to our plight.
(Please refer to article attached) As an education committee, I respectfully submit that you recognize the merits of HB 2208 and will realize that a favorable committee recommendation to the Senate Floor is the only realistic choice that can be made.

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A5-4

Illiteracy on the rise among vision-impaired students

The Associated Press

DENVER — There is a crisis of illiteracy among blind students because many of them aren't learning Braille in public schools, the head of a national parents group says.

Nearly half of all vision-impaired students — 48 percent — read Braille in 1965. By 1989, the number had dropped to 12 percent, according to the American Printing House for the Blind.

"Illiteracy among blind children is a real crisis," said Barbara Cheadle, president of Parents of Blind Children at the National Federation of the Blind in Baltimore. "I don't think it's adequate education if you let a student get through college without the ability to read a sentence that

they have written themselves."

Cheadle traces the genesis of the decline to the 1950s, when parents began enrolling blind children in local public schools rather than specialized residential schools.

"Some parents think their children don't need it, but they would if they knew blind professionals and saw them struggling to learn it at midlife," Cheadle said.

Diane McGeorge, executive director of the Colorado Center for the Blind, said, "With the advent of the tape recorder, the educational system said, 'Kids don't need to know Braille because everything is on tape.' We now have bright kids who can't take notes in the classroom."

McGeorge, the federation's Colorado president,

said Colorado schools routinely teach Braille.

"But if children have even a minimal amount of sight, they make them use closed-circuit television, which enlarges print for kids. These kids aren't taught Braille," she said.

In the state's largest school district, Jefferson County, 11 of 72 blind or vision-impaired students receive Braille instruction. About half of the 27 blind students in Denver schools take Braille.

"If a child is totally blind, the need for Braille is definitely obvious," said Sara Officer, a Jefferson County teacher for the vision-impaired. "If they have a visual impairment, it would depend on what their future is predicted to be, what their interest is in Braille and whether the need is seen educationally for the near future."

ATTACHMENTS

6-1 THROUGH

6-3 ARE IN

BRAILLE. DID

NOT SCAN.

HANDS

FOR JUST A MINUTE
LOOK AT YOUR HAND.
HAVE YOU EVER THOUGHT
OF HOW MANY THINGS
YOUR HAND CAN DO?

YOUR HAND IS ONE OF
THE BEST TOOLS IN THE WORLD.
IT CAN DIG.
IT CAN HOLD.
IT CAN SEW.
IT CAN TWIST.
IT CAN PICK UP.

YOU CAN USE YOUR HAND
TO PRETEND.
PRETEND YOUR HAND IS
A SHOVEL,
A CUP,
A TELESCOPE,
A HORN,
A TWEEZER,
A HAMMER,
A FORK.

MAYBE YOU CAN THINK
OF ANOTHER WAY
HANDS ARE USED.
THE HUMAN HAND MUST BE
ONE OF GOD'S GREATEST CREATIONS.
IT HAS SMALL BONES
AND CRAFTY FINGERS.
A HAND IS SO WELL MADE
IT CAN REMOVE A TINY SPLINTER
FROM ANOTHER FINGER.

A HAND IS A GIFT
THAT YOU CAN USE
TO HELP OTHERS.

HAVE YOU EVER USED YOUR HAND
TO PAT A CRYING BABY?
HAVE YOU EVER USED YOUR HAND
TO HELP WASH A CAR?
HAVE YOU EVER USED YOUR HAND
TO PICK UP CLOTHES FROM THE FLOOR?
HAVE YOU EVER USED YOUR HAND
TO HELP A CHILD GET UP
WHO HAS FALLEN DOWN?

SOMETIMES WE SAY
WE DON'T HAVE ANYTHING
TO GIVE SOMEONE ELSE.
BUT WE DO.
WE HAVE A HAND.
WE CAN USE IT AS A GIFT.
WE REACH IT OUT
AND HELP SOMEONE ELSE.

YOUR HAND IS ONE
OF THE SPECIAL THINGS
YOU HAVE.

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State Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services

Testimony in Support of House Bill No. 2208

Mr. Chairperson and Members of the Committee:

SRS supports House Bill 2208. Reading and writing Braille is an important communication skill for people who are blind to use in many ways related to employment and independent living. For example, use of Braille:

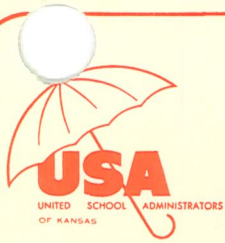
- * Allows people who are blind the independence in communication that many of us take for granted. For example, during a routine business meeting, we need to be able to read information that is distributed, take notes on key points as reminders or refer back to previous documents to refresh our memory. Following the meeting, we need to be able to go back to information that was distributed and re-read it at our leisure. These activities can be achieved independently by people who use Braille.
- * Facilitates self-communication, such jotting down notes, recipes or telephone numbers, reminders about doctors appointments and grocery lists, for people who are blind. In turn, this self-communication enhances the ability to live independently.

Yet the teaching of Braille has diminished due to development of alternative means of communication and lack of specialized teaching personnel. HB 2208 moves to restore deserved prominence and importance to the use of Braille by providing for eligible students to receive instruction in Braille reading and writing as part of their individualized education plans.

Any action which will facilitate preparation of blind persons for employment and independent living is welcomed by vocational rehabilitation personnel. House Bill 2208 will have that net effect, and I urge you to pass it.

Glen Yancey
Acting Commissioner
Rehabilitation Services
Social and Rehabilitation Services
296-3911
March 26, 1991

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HB 2208

BRAILLE READING AND WRITING INSTRUCTION

Testimony presented before the Senate Education Committee

by

Brilla Highfill Scott, Associate Executive Director
United School Administrators of Kansas

March 26, 1991

Mister Chairman and Members of the Senate Education Committee:

United School Administrators supports HB 2208 which provides braille instruction in reading and writing to blind students. Our association encourages your committee to promote this bill which assures this essential training for the visually disabled child.

United School Administrators of Kansas appreciates your attention to this testimony.

(t:hb2208.sen)

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**BRaille: THE OPENING OF DOORS
TO REAL LITERACY FOR THE BLIND**

Submitted By: Cindy Lou Hallenbeck
In Support of House Bill 2208

I am a blind individual, totally blind since birth, so my learning of braille was never an issue. I attended the Kansas State School for the Blind, now the Kansas State School for the Visually Handicapped. The reading alternatives to braille--recordings, computers and scanners--were either not available to the blind or were in a limited supply then. Most blind children attended state schools for the blind. For those students who had no vision braille materials were provided, though often the texts were old and worn. Even at this school, however, braille was not always available. In high school our literature materials were only available in print, so our English teacher produced them herself with a braille writer in order that we would be able to read them. It was exciting to learn to read and to have library books, school texts, and music at my finger tips, and I became a proud and proficient braille reader with the ability to read at speeds comparable to sighted students of my age and intelligence, and much better than many students who were struggling to read print.

At the school as we were growing up it became apparent that those students who had enough vision to see print at all were superior to those of us who "had to read braille." They were given very large, cumbersome, books which were produced in very large print. Some of them were able, with considerable difficulty, to read some books produced in smaller print. These print reading students were known as "sight savers," and it was viewed as some sort of tragedy if a student's vision deteriorated to the extent that he/she was required to begin braille instruction. Even at schools for the blind the attitude existed that braille should only be taught if all else failed.

The public as a whole views braille as a medium that is only used when all else fails. Generally, it is believed that no real speed can be achieved in braille. Because of this fact and the fact that it is bulky and cumbersome, they rationalize, the expense of producing braille can't be worth it. With today's available technology, braille is no longer necessary, they say. I became a lector at my church a couple of years ago, and one standard comment has been, "I had no idea braille could be read that fast," so I know that people discount the efficiency of braille.

Teachers often indicate that they would prefer not to teach blind students braille unless it is necessary because it is too slow. Often such teachers have acquired little or no proficiency in the reading and writing of braille themselves. However, like any other skill, speed in braille reading can be achieved with disciplined, regular practice.

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It is now possible, because of some of the same technology available which would seem to make braille obsolete, to produce almost any material in braille that one could want, and it can be obtained in a cost effective manner. Scanners are available to read the printed page and produce a computer file of the text. braille translation software is available which can translate computer files in to Standard English braille, and a variety of computer driven braille printers can be purchased, ranging in price from \$1700 to \$15,000.

I am so pleased that I have had the opportunity to learn braille--to be literate like my sighted friends. I cannot imagine constantly relying on others to read materials I need, or having to search for things on recordings. I am an organ performance major at the University of Kansas, and without braille learning music would be so much more difficult. I love using my computer, but I would grow weary of synthesized speech. Proofreading documents such as this one is done so much more efficiently with braille, so I am glad that I can also use the computer to produce braille.

So many of the "sight savers" I have known have learned that their lack of braille skills has become or is becoming a liability.

Please recommend for passage House Bill 2208 and provide the opportunity for braille literacy to all the blind students in the State of Kansas.

KANSAS STATE SCHOOL FOR THE VISUALLY HANDICAPPED

**TEACHER ASSOCIATION
1100 State Avenue
Kansas City, Kansas 66102**

To: Senate Education Committee
From: Madeleine Burkindine, Member
RE: SB 2208
Date: March 26, 1991

My name is Madeleine Burkindine, and I live at 11900 Wenonga Lane, Leawood, Kansas 66209. I represent the Kansas State School for the Visually Handicapped's Teacher Association, and we are a proponent of SB 2208.

It is well documented that skilled teachers are essential to the development and success of students. Therefore, members of our Teacher Association support the standards in SB 2208 relating to braille skills of teachers. We currently have members who are completing the national library service for the blind course through the University of Minnesota teacher preparation program. As you may know, our teachers must now go out of state for training since the Kansas Board of Regents does not train teachers of the blind.

An important aspect of SB 2208 is its recognition of the Individual Education Plan (IEP). The IEP, mandated by Kansas and federal law is indeed the most important part of the historic P.L. 94-142, the Education of All Handicapped Children Act (now referred to as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act - IDEA). However, it falls short, on occasion, in that it relies on the assumption that schools have the desire, access, and money to hire trained teachers of the blind and to purchase the necessary books and equipment.

This bill assures equal access and opportunity for all Kansas children who are blind, and therefore our association proudly supports SB 2208.

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Blind Children of Kansas Deserve Mandated Literacy:
In support of H. B. 2208

James Canaday

I write to demonstrate the necessity for "the Braille Bill," House Bill 2,208. Illiteracy is now recognized as a serious problem among americans; this problem is magnified among the blind. As among sighted people, the ability to directly read the written form of language permits much better recollection, a broad range of personal notes or labels and direct practice in the mechanics of language.

To introduce myself and my experience learning the vital skills of blindness, I was born with very substantial physical deformities in both eyes. These made my vision significantly limited. I became completely blind at age 13. Only after my partial vision totally dissipated did I qualify for braille instruction. Looking back, I truly would have benefited from much earlier braille instruction. Until I lost that low-vision, I used only the "sight saving" methods of extra light and high magnification for reading. This is probably why to this day I view reading as a delight and treasure, since it was so difficult for me when I was young. That is, "sight saving" methods are neither "sight preserving" or helpful in the reading process. They only make reading slow and cumbersome. My main reading tool was a "jeweler's loop," a set of small lenses which clipped on the frame of my strong glasses. These lenses further magnified the text so that I could read it, though slowly--often one letter at a time. I thank God that I had fine dedicated teachers for mobility and braille instruction. Within a couple of years, I had acquired proficiency in both. However, my low-vision should not have disqualified me for earlier instruction; instead, that low-vision should have qualified me for that same instruction when I was learning my ABCs for the first time! Braille literacy would have allowed me to read much longer and with less cumbersome apparatus being necessary. I am now a graduate student in the Psychology Department of Kansas University. My research also pertains to braille literacy, which I will shortly describe.

I am certainly not the first to point out the vitality of braille in allowing direct contact and exercise in the language. The National Federation of the Blind (NFB) includes whole divisions of members who would attest to the exact same observation and experience. By reading the physical language, the reader is connected to the written message by the shape of the text, its punctuation and logical structure. Besides, the reader gets the best kind of spelling practice by reading over and over properly spelled words.

My research on the effects of blind writers' writing media has identified several important facts which underscore

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the vitality of braille instruction for blind and low-vision children. First, library research revealed several studies tying memory for "place on the page" with the ability to recall the content written there; that is, the print page organization gave readers and writers memory cues which supported recollection of the content. Since the braille page is laid out almost identically, the braille page offers these same memory cues for blind persons. In a survey of blind persons who write often, braille also figured prominently both as the preferred medium for writing and for organizational work in preparing to write.

I polled 64 blind persons who reported that they write often. Fully three-quarters of this sample reported that their writing was part of paid work. The overwhelming majority of this group had attained at least a Bachelor's Degree. However, a disturbing minority of this high achieving and highly educated sample, 22%, reported that they had never received any formal training in braille. Anecdotally, several of these blind writers reported that they taught themselves braille. Another disturbing minority, 12.5% or eight participants, reported that they had never received any formal training in writing or in logically organizing text. This number apparently was generally also contained in the group who received no braille training; without basic training in literacy (braille), how could they have gone on to study the construction of complex texts?

Current students only represented 17.2% of this sample. The ages ranged from 22 to 74 years. A slight majority of the participants were female.

Even those who typically used a computer to write (50%) generally identified braille as a crucial medium in their preorganization for writing. Thus, technology did not replace braille for these writers; instead, braille allowed them to put technology to more effective use.

In summary, I personally use braille heavily, even though I typically write using a PC. Labels and note taking are common ways in which I use braille in my daily life. I do regret learning braille at the eighth grade, instead of in the first and second grades. I sincerely hope that H.B. 2208 will pass as written, to provide blind and low-vision Kansas children the opportunity to learn braille properly.

TESTIMONY OF ROBERT L. TABOR
BEFORE THE Senate COMMITTEE ON
EDUCATION

The Honorable Joseph Harder, Chairman
26 March, 1991
Concerning: House bill 2208

Good afternoon Mr. Chairman and members of the committee:

My name is Robert Tabor, and I live at 1234 Tennessee, Lawrence, Kansas. I appreciate this opportunity to testify as a member of the National Federation of the Blind of Kansas, in favor of HB 2208.

As a general principle, most of us have heard or have said that "reading is fundamental" or that "we must be literate in order to perform successfully in modern society. We often catch ourselves saying this glibly, as if this were our own original thought; and when we hear these things, few if any of us question its validity or accuracy. In other words, this paranoetic advice has evolved into a truism. Yet, when education of the blind is at stake, some, including some members of the education community some how find ways to take exception to the premise that braille literacy education is necessary for the blind. Yet, for many with some residual eye sight, braille is the only practical means of literacy; and yet hundreds of legally blind children and youth are denied opportunities to learn braille. Instead, they are forced to use large print with a magnifying glass, or, sometimes, with more elaborate electronic visual aids, such as a VTEK, greatly resembling a TV screen. But even these sophisticated devices require the proper lighting, some level of training, and a great deal of financial resources.

Pre-recorded tapes and talking computers are also utilized quite heavily, and I personally do use and appreciate them, but they will never replace braille literacy skills. For without braille, how can one be sure of the correctness of spellings of names of cities, countries, and proper names, such as the names of the membership of this Senate committee?

I may mis-spell your names on verbal hearing, but with braille, I can with assured confidence spell the name of a state Senator, a company or product name, or even a difficult name of a Kansas community such as Osawatomie.

More importantly, because I learned to use braille at an early age, I am able to utilize it efficiently in my professional and business endeavors.

Although I was taught braille due to my total blindness, most of my partially sighted peers were not taught braille because of their remaining vision. Though it has been many years since I attended a residential school for the blind, I still recall how some of my class mates had to hunch over books just to peek out a story, poem, or math problem, character by character, or to see what they were writing. In most cases, some training in braille literacy would have eliminated much of this type of mental and

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physical stress, and would have benefited them in their adult lives. Section 2 (L29) underscores precisely where the source of difficulty has been in teaching and learning braille to blind students. As a rule, parents and educators have little if any problem recognizing a totally blind student's need for braille. There may be any number of reasons for the resistance to teaching braille to legally blind students who have some remaining vision. Perhaps some educators feel that teaching braille to a child or teenager may remind him/her of the eventual loss of eye sight. School districts are often hesitant to commit resources to provide braille instruction in schools wherein some legally blind, but no totally blind students are enrolled. In any event, there is no credence to the theory that even the most inefficient use of printed media is better than braille for a student. Braille reading may be slow at first, but so it is with any newly acquired skill. Likewise, most books, periodicals, and other literature are not available in braille, although production of braille is made much easier with computerized braille embossment printers and translator software. But history has shown that braille books will become available to the extent driven by consumer demand. But without systematic braille education, the braille-reading blind population will continue to dwindle. Let me conclude by thanking the committee for considering this important policy decision, and to thank and encourage you for showing leadership in the improvement of educational opportunities for our young blind Kansans by reporting favorably on House Bill 2208.

Robert L. Tabor
1234 Tennessee,
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