

Chairperson Williams and K-12 committee,

Thank you for taking the time to read my written testimony on HB2612. As I reviewed this bill, there must be an assumption that school districts are not following established laws.

I spent over 25 years in public education (North Carolina & Missouri) and continue to work with school district communicators across the United States.

I believe strongly that the state legislature should allow the State Board of Education to perform its established duties. School accreditation is more than a series of numbers or a disagreement on how dollars should be used or how a report should be completed. Schools are required to follow state laws and State Board of Education regulations. If schools don't show growth or meet expectations, districts are provided the opportunity to review the process while KSDE provides guidance and support. Accreditation affects every student in a school district and should not be used as a punitive punishment based on the interpretation of a law. Accreditation should remain in the hands of the department who have the staff, skills, understanding, and experience working with schools and school districts; the resources to support all schools.

Another concern with the bill is a state audit must be performed by KSDE to reinstate the district to accredited status. Every auditor I have ever come in contact with only sees numbers. Often, they pay little attention to why numbers might have changed. They are already overwhelmed with their caseload, so adding to their duties will only diminish the fidelity of their work.

As an example, I'm married to someone who audits government credit card use for the federal government. He's often overwhelmed with ensuring federal policies and regulations are followed while simultaneously navigating the nuances of each department and agency, as well as giving special attention to the role each employee plays in the overall mission. While some things are black and white, he recognizes some situations and conditions require more information, more understanding, more training, and more latitude rather than a quick removal of their access to funds. HB2612 would eliminate understanding the nuances of each staff member and child in school districts.

One could ask why the legislature has been able to break the law for so many years by not fully funding special education. Knowing the history of the Kansas budget, why did it take multiple lawsuits before the legislature fully funded general education? Possibly because of the discrepancy in interpretation of what is fully

funded. I urge you to not get school districts caught up in the middle of interpreting the laws and divert them from their mission of educating students.

In summary, the schools are governed by the State School Board and **locally** elected boards of education. Please allow our local boards to monitor educators and the daily work they perform. If they are intentionally breaking the law, I'm confident our boards can handle the issue.

Thank you for your time.

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