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March 4, 2024

Remote Testimony to Senate Education Committee

Honorable Chair, Senator Molly Baumgardner

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Room 445-S, State Capitol Building

Proponent [SB 479](#) – Transferring teachers from the KPERS 3 cash balance plan to the KPERS 2 plan and defining teachers for purposes of KPERS

Hearing: Tuesday, March 5, 2024, 1:30 PM Room 144-S

Honorable Chair Baumgardner and Committee Members,

Please accept this remote testimony in strong support of SB 479 – Transferring teachers from the KPERS 3 cash balance plan to the KPERS 2 plan and defining teachers for purposes of KPERS. This bill, transferring KPERS 3 to KPERS 2, is in alignment with [Kansas PTA Standing Positions and Legislative Priorities](#).

KS PTA Standing Position – Supporting Educators. Kansas PTA supports efforts to attract and keep educators, including state funding for teacher mentoring, professional development and other evidenced-based programs and policies that promote quality instruction.

Teachers, principals and district administrators are central to the effectiveness of the public school system ([The Learning Policy Institute \(LPI\), 2024](#)). The chronic vacancies in teaching positions alone – at 1,600 across Kansas in 2022 – call for a comprehensive approach to the recruitment and retention of K-12 teachers and future administrators. A meaningful KPERS program is a critical element of this comprehensive approach.

- The retention of experienced educators brings invaluable knowledge, skills and continuity to the learning environment. Veteran teachers provide mentorship, guidance, and institutional knowledge that contributes to the overall quality of education.
- Teachers are more likely to invest in education-related graduate degrees and certifications, knowing they will have a reliable income stream in retirement, positively impacting their job performance and commitment.
- The retention of teachers builds relationships and trust within neighborhood school communities. This trust and predictability are important assets, as the level of stress and anxiety has risen within our society.

- Financial security in retirement contributes to overall well-being and can reduce stress-related health problems among retired teachers.
- Experienced teachers become building principals and district leaders. And we know from the Kansas Teacher Retention Initiative ([Emporia State University, 2023](#)), that the building principal is among the strongest and most significant predictors of teacher retention and engagement.
- Pension benefits provide a steady source of income for retirees, which can stimulate local economies as retirees spend money on goods and services.
- A strong pension program demonstrates a **commitment to valuing teachers** and investing in their future – a narrative that has not only been absent in the United States but would be refreshing in contrast to the unwarranted attacks that educators have been subject to for decades.

The Kansas PTA recognizes that staff shortages are a national crisis and pervasive across most industries, accelerated by the global pandemic. The national cost of failing to retain teachers is estimated at \$8.5 billion a year, 150% of a departing teacher’s salary (LPI, 2024). In Kansas, teacher turnover is estimated to cost nearly \$49 million in 2022.

The Kansas legislature has made meaningful strides to boost the recruitment of teachers, particularly through the restoration of general education state aid under the Gannon agreement. An investment in the full funding of special education could allow districts to offer more competitive wages for teachers and paraeducators in this hyper competitive, post-pandemic economic climate. However, a meaningful KPERS program is essential for retaining our Kansas educators – committed to preparing Kansas youth for post-school success.

Kansas PTA is in support of this bill to offer a meaningful KPERS program to all teachers. Thank you for this opportunity and your consideration of our testimony.

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THE PTA POSITION

Kansas PTA is a nonpartisan association that promotes the welfare of children and youth. The PTA does not endorse any candidate or political party. Rather, we advocate for policies and legislation that affect Kansas youth in alignment with our legislative platform and priorities. [PTA mission and purpose](#) have remained the same since our inception over 100 years ago, focused on facilitating every child’s potential and empowering families and communities to advocate for all children.