



February 7, 2025  
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Chair Erickson and members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments in opposition of SB48, amending K.S.A 2024 Supp. 5170. Accountability for improving student academic performance is a goal that both the Kansas Legislature and school districts agree upon, particularly the Wichita Public Schools. Our local board made student outcomes the primary focus of its 2024-2029 Strategic Plan. Every board meeting now has mandatory updates on the results of measures put into place to improve academic achievement. Accountability, including taking responsibility for current outcomes and making appropriate adjustments is a positive, actionable step in a continue cycle of improvement. Punishment is about enforcing rules with sanctions. The accreditation process was not designed to be used as a “stick” to punish school districts who do not meet an undefined amount of “significant” progress on one imperfect measurement that takes no other circumstances under consideration.

Kansas statute charges the Kansas State Board of Education with the accreditation of schools, a process that provided official recognition of the school having met a set of standards based on a rigorous accreditation model known as the Kansas Education Systems Accreditation (KESA). Private schools are not required to participate in this process. The new vision of KESA is to meet the demands of today’s employers, moving away from a “one-size fits all” system that relies exclusively on state assessments, but calls for a more student-focused system that results in higher academic skills AND employability and citizenship skills. Through KESA, schools now focus on results and processes necessary to improve student learning.

“Accredited” means schools have provided conclusive evidence of growth in student performance and intentional, quality growth process. Thus, a system already exists to qualify schools making gains as “accredited.” If some KESA measures are not met, schools are qualified as “conditionally accredited or not accredited.” Further, KESA provides the framework to evaluate the systems but cannot provide the resources to overcome the student barriers to being successful within those systems. That is the local board’s role to evaluate the most impactful barriers to improvement and put resources in place to mitigate those barriers where possible. In Wichita, with over 80% free and reduced meal students, concentrated poverty is the single most impactful barrier to overcome. Losing our accreditation as punishment for the poverty barrier limiting “significant” improvement will not solve the challenges to student achievement caused by poverty.

If K-12 schools are making any progress on state assessments or can show other data to support that students are improving academically, current accreditation should not be threatened. We respectfully ask the committee to not advance this bill that sets forth more punishment than accountability, ignores the KESA process, and contains vague improvement requirements that do not fit the circumstances and challenges of individual school districts and their student populations.