

**February 7, 2025**

**Remote Testimony to Senate Education Committee**

Honorable Chair, Senator Renee Erickson

Cyndie Rexer, Committee Assistant

785-296-7476 [Cyndie.Rexer@senate.ks.gov](mailto:Cyndie.Rexer@senate.ks.gov), [s.Education@senate.ks.gov](mailto:s.Education@senate.ks.gov)

Room 445-S, State Capitol Building

**Opposed to Senate Bill 48 – Needs Assessment and Local Control**

Hearing: Friday, February 7, 2025, 1:30 PM Room 144-S

Madame Chair Erickson and Committee Members,

The Kansas Parent Teacher Association (PTA) is comprised of volunteers, many of whom have full time jobs, family obligations and community service commitments. We value our public schools and the opportunities created for all Kansas youth.

**This bill on school accreditation asserts a punitive, high stakes approach that unnecessarily threatens to invalidate the diploma of every high school senior, at any given time.** The underlying assumption of this bill and bill sponsors are inappropriately punitive, disrespectful of our administrators, educators and support staff, and in opposition to the Kansas PTA mission and Legislative Platform.

- The language in the bill is problematically vague: lines 8-16, p.2 “School districts and schools that are found to be out of compliance with one or more applicable federal and state statutes and rules and regulations .... Failure of a school district to correct the noncompliance by the established deadline shall result in the loss of the school district's accreditation.”
- We can only estimate that the number of regulations, rules, federal laws and state laws to be in the thousands, if not more. Kansas Association of School Boards (KASB) and big districts hire attorneys to monitor changes in state laws and regulations and craft policies and procedures to remain in compliance. Public education is a human endeavor and a constant effort to be in good standing.
- Nearly 90% of all Kansas students and parents rely on a robust public education system that is responsive to the ever-changing demands of the society into which students graduate. What is the rationale for putting students’ hard earned high school diplomas at risk? Say for example, no dentist responds to a district ad to provide the required free student exams (72-6251)? Where is the legislative intent that would clarify whether this ONE infraction costs all those high school seniors their post-secondary admissions?
- The 280 plus public school superintendents, 2,800 elected school board members and their professional associations (e.g., KASB, USA|KS) are intentional about remaining in compliance with state law and regulations.

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Attachment 5

- The Kansas public school system is the only institution dedicated to providing a quality education to 500,000 Kansas child, regardless of their unique needs and the needs of the community – bound primarily by the level of adequacy and equity in which the Kansas legislature chooses to allocate state aid. How does the state legislature’s responsibility to provide suitable finance for general and special education factor into the equation?
- Compliance is a component of the Kansas Department of Education (KSDE) and State Board of Education (SBOE) accreditation requirements. KSDE has a comprehensive, preventive approach to support a school district that may be struggling well before a complete loss of accreditation is warranted. This approach is in the best interest of all Kansas youth.
- The Kansas SBOE has authority over educational policy, such as accreditation, under Article VI of the Kansas Constitution. Kansas students are best served following the recommendations of the dedicated educational professionals at KSDE.

The educators and staff of our Kansas public schools continue to rise to the challenge and beat the odds ([KASB, July 2023](#); [August 2023](#), [KBOR, 2024](#)).

- The number of college credits earned by high school students reached an all-time high in 2024.
- The number of students taking Advanced Placement (AP) courses and receiving a passing score is pushing new levels of success.
- The statewide high school graduation rate increased between the school years ending 2023 to 2024, including Kansas youth eligible for free/reduced lunch, students with disabilities, students in foster care, for those unhoused, in the military, and among black and Hispanic students.
- Kansas students continue to perform at or above the national average on multiple standardized metrics ([NAEP, 2022](#); [NCES 2024](#)).

Our educators, students and families patiently await full funding of special education, serving students enrolled in public and private schools. Yet, concern is growing as the state and federal special education funding shortfall erodes the recent restoration of general education. Our K-12 public educators rose to the decades-long challenge of deep cuts to general education funding, which just reached a purchasing-power this past school year to match the pre-2009 recession cuts (aka the Montoy agreement). Our educators rose to the challenges of a global pandemic. Let’s recognize the new 2023 the baseline ([KASB, 2024](#)), monitor progress, and support our public schools to ensure all Kansas kids have equal opportunity to achieve. Kansas PTA strongly urges members of this committee to vote NO on this punitive bill. Thank you for your consideration.

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Mary F. Sinclair, PhD  
Kansas PTA Advocacy Team  
@KsPTALeg

Cc: Denise Sultz, Kansas PTA President  
Devin Wilson, VP of Advocacy  
Rachel Russell, Legislative Liaison  
Kansas PTA Advocacy Team, [KansasPTA@gmail.com](mailto:KansasPTA@gmail.com)

#### **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.*