



Kansas City, Kansas Public Schools

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HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE

HB 2400

March 30, 2011

Mr. Chairman, Members of the Committee:

I am Dr. Cynthia Lane, superintendent for the Kansas City, Kansas Public Schools.

HB 2400 would radically alter the definition of "At-risk pupils" as it applies to the school finance funding formula. It would replace the current definition of at-risk funding for students in grades 4-12, (which defined them as students who are eligible for free meals under the national school lunch act) with one that defines them as students who scored less than proficient on the state assessments. This change would completely alter the intention of at-risk funding, and have a devastating impact upon children who have benefited tremendously from the current definition. I urge you to reject this change.

School districts are held to a common standard of accountability, which is just as it should be. All students deserve the same opportunity that a strong education provides, regardless of the zip code they live in. At the same time, research has made clear that certain students cost more to get the same standard as other students, because of the challenges that they bring with them to school. Students who grow up in poverty (for which eligibility for free and/or reduced lunch serves as a proxy) are capable of reaching the same high levels of achievement as their more advantaged peers, but they need extra resources and support to get there. The same is true for students for whom English is not their primary language.

Studies by this legislature's own Kansas Legislative Division of Post Audit affirm the value of the current definition of "at-risk student," as do the funding decisions in the vast majority of other states that provide funding for at-risk students. Our district has used at-risk funding to continue and accelerate the academic achievement of our students, and to close the achievement gap between groups of students. The changes that are proposed in this legislation would change Kansas from a state that provides additional funding to support the students who most need it, and reward districts that fail to educate certain students well. Such a change is not good for our children, or for the state of Kansas.

Dr. Cynthia Lane
KCKPS Superintendent

Unified District 500

Appropriations Committee

Date March 30, 2011

Attachment 4