



House Appropriations Committee **Rep. Rhoades, Chair**

H.B. 2400 – Amending at-risk definition

*Submitted by Diane Gjerstad
Wichita Public Schools*

January 31, 2012

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

H.B. 2400, if enacted, would substantially reduce at-risk funding for school districts. Just last session a Goldwater Institute representative commended Kansas for ranking 5th in the nation for the achievement of students in poverty on NAEP. This bill would remove over \$100 *million* from a component of the school finance formula which has a proven track record of increased student achievement.

Legislative Post Audit 2006 *Cost Study* on school finance outlined the academic difficulties economically disadvantaged students experience compared to their peers. The legislature has on numerous occasions studied the at-risk component of the school finance formula. Each study has confirmed the current policy which appropriates funding based on the number of students eligible for free lunch and allows districts the flexibility to spend those dollars on the students who need additional support.

The 2007 At Risk Education Committee, chaired by Dr. Andy Tompkins, and included former Education Commissioner Bob Corkins, was charged with a thorough examination of the system of identifying and funding the education of at-risk students. From their report:

- The Council continues to believe that the best state proxy for identifying at-risk students is poverty, whether measured by free, or free and reduced price lunches.
- The Council believes that a single tool, such as state assessment scores, is too narrow to determine if a child is at risk.
- The Council affirmed differentiating at risk funding with the core funding being decided on poverty, the second level taking into account density, and found the third level based on proficiency as “interesting and potentially effective approach which needs further study”.

Mr. Chairman, we urge the committee to reject this bill which would undo an effective system of targeting dollars which contributes to Kansas ranking 5th in the nation in the performance of economically disadvantaged students.