



Kansas City, Kansas Public Schools

Unified School District No. 500

SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

SB 361

February 6, 2012

Madam Chairwoman, Members of the Committee:

I am Dr. Cynthia Lane, Superintendent of the Kansas City, Kansas Public Schools (KCKPS).

This will be an extremely important legislative session for the future of education in the state of Kansas. The decisions that are made concerning the funding formula will determine whether Kansas continues to be a state where education is the ticket to the American dream for all students, regardless of where they live or the income level of their parents, or whether certain students will have access to a high quality education, while many others do not.

If we are to stay true to who we are as Kansans, whatever decisions are made concerning school finance must adhere to a few basic principals. First, the Kansas Constitution requires the legislature to "make suitable provision for finance of the educational interests of the state." Thus, the constitution states (and the Kansas Supreme Court has affirmed) that the responsibility for financing public education is a state responsibility. If we are to continue to provide equitable educational opportunity for all students, the responsibility for funding of education must continue to reside with the state legislature, and attempts to push that responsibility to the local level cannot be allowed to succeed.

Next, because we have always been a fiscally conservative state, we must make sure that our formula ties funding to schools directly to what it actually costs to educate kids. In other words, there must be a basic funding level for all students, and then there must be additional dollars given (weights) for students whose additional challenges make them more costly to serve, such as students living in poverty or who are English language learners. It is important that this principle include the maintenance of eligibility for free and/or reduced lunch as the factor which determines which students are considered "at-risk." Such a system provides for the most equality of opportunity for children, regardless of the community in which they live.

In addition, providing equality of educational opportunity includes returning to the practice of providing equalization for capital outlay expenditures. Districts in low property-wealth communities will never be able to match the facilities that are available to more advantaged communities, but equalization at least provides all communities the resources necessary to provide the facilities their students need to be successful.

Finally, funding education is THE most important function of the state of Kansas, and having a well-educated population is the most important way that the legislature can impact the quality of life of citizens and communities across the state. Having the will to secure the resources necessary to fund a high-quality education for children in every community in Kansas **MUST** be the top priority for this legislative session, and for every one that follows. For the state of Kansas to be the best that it can be, all of us must make sure to put the needs of the children of Kansas first. It is our moral and civic responsibility, and they are counting on us.

2010 N. 59th Street
913•551•3200

Kansas City, Kansas 66104
Fax: 913•551•3217

8