



Kansas PTA
715 SW 10th Street, Topeka KS 66612
submitted by Mary F Sinclair, PhD, Legislative Co-Chair,
on behalf of Kansas PTA President, Tammy Bartels
www.kansas-pta-legislative.org ▪ kansaspta@gmail.com

Testimony to House Education Committee

Chair, Representative Kasha Kelley
Tuesday, February 19, 2013
Sue Mollenkamp, Assistant - Ph 6-7671
1:30 pm, Room 112-N

Madame Chair Kelley and Committee Members,

In honor of Parent Leadership Month, I appreciate the opportunity to share some of the priorities and concerns of the Kansas Parent and Teacher Association, thousands of Kansans strong and the largest volunteer child advocacy organization in the country with more than five million members nationally.

I serve as the Legislative Co-Chair for the Kansas PTA. I am a graduate of the Kansas public schools and a current consumer with two school-aged children. I have a Master's in Education from Harvard University and a PhD in Special Education from the University of Minnesota, with professional expertise in the area of school dropout prevention. During my tenure at the University of Minnesota, I was also part of the research team who conducted the first national and state evaluation of charter schools – Minnesota being the first state to establish law in 1991.

The mission and values of the PTA have remained the same since our inception over 100 years ago:

- PTA Mission - to make every child's potential a reality by engaging and empowering families and communities to advocate for all children.

Through advocacy, as well as family and community education over the century, PTA has established programs and [called for legislation](#) that improves our children's lives including: the creation of kindergarten classes, child labor laws, public health service, hot and healthy lunch programs, juvenile justice system, mandatory immunization, arts in education and school safety.

I would characterize the PTAs initial assessment of the 2013 legislative session, as one of a growing concern among parents, patrons and teachers for the emerging nature and sheer volume of bills out of alignment with the [Kansas PTA Legislative Platform](#), specifically challenging the quality of Kansas K-12 public education. I would ask committee members to consider the bill being discussed today, HB2319 - creating a coalition of innovation districts, in relation to the PTA position on charter schools included at the end of this testimony. This request is based on the observation that this bill appears to essentially transform every school in a district, into a charter school, all at once:

1. While PTA supports quality public charter school law as noted below, the current language of the bill leaves some ambiguity as to whether the implementation of innovative districts would actually meet all of the PTA quality criteria for charter-type school systems ([National PTA Public Charter Schools Position Statement](#)). I would ask that the committee review this bill in relation to the

criteria identified in the PTA Position statement and acknowledge that I raise more questions than answers today.

2. One point of ambiguity relates to the authorizing entity: It appears that the state board of education will serve as the sole authorizer? If so, will the school board be given additional resources to provide oversight for the potential equivalent of hundreds of charter schools being initiated all at once? If not, how can we as parents and teachers assume appropriate oversight is being implemented in conjunction with districts new status to innovate and local school boards new level of responsibilities?
3. What is the rationale for using a partisan appointment process for determining the Board Coalition Chair, via appointment by the governor, senate president and house speaker? Why not establish the selection of a chairperson through a mechanism of non-partisan professional and patrons of the education community, facilitated by a related organization like the Kansas Association of School Boards?
4. Does the bill specify who/what acting agent(s) has the authority to determine what constitutes parental and community consent to become an innovative district?
5. Under the waiver from certain regulations and laws, would schools and districts under 'innovative' status have the right, for example, to fine students \$2,000 or some arbitrarily determined amount for behavioral infractions as is done in a Chicago charter schools? What would constitute a behavioral infraction? Are innovative districts held to the same requirements as traditional public districts to meet the needs of students with behavioral challenges before resorting to expulsion and out-of-school suspensions?
6. What is the compelling evidence that would lead the state to consider this legislation in lieu of restoring cuts in base state aid to our traditional K-12 school system?
 - Scholarly research suggests that the most likely way to achieve continued improvements in student academic performance is by moderately increasing spending on resource allocation of those practices with known 'effect sizes' large enough to yield a significant increase in achievement (Greenwald et al, 1996; Baker, 2012).
 - Several of these known practices, for example, were identified and discussed by panelists at the Governor's Literacy Summit last year, which included Don Deshler from the University of Kansas who is an internationally recognized expert in the area of literacy.
 - The analyses conducted for the Legislative Post Audit Cost Study (2006) found a near one-to-one relationship between instructionally related expenditures and student outcomes, indicating that Kansas school districts know how to help youth achieve state standards given sufficient resources to implement those instructional interventions.
 - This finding was replicated again in Kansas, as evidenced by the increases in student performance on state assessments associated with the increases in funding following the Montoy decision (KASB, 2012).
 - Why is the legislature pursuing policies that undermine teacher's expectations for reasonable compensation and professional working conditions when scholarly research consistently finds a strong positive relationship between student outcomes and the quality of the teaching workforce ([Linda Darling-Hammond](#))?
7. Research studies are not all created equal, nor are all interpretations of data equally accurate. On quick way to assess the credibility of educational research and their associated conclusions is to ask whether the study (Baker & Welner, 2011):
 - appears in a refereed journal or book

- uses data drawn from the population with characteristics to which results will be generalized
 - has outcome measures that are some form of academic achievement or indicator of student engagement
 - employs a model that controls for socioeconomic characteristics, fit with longitudinal data
 - includes data that are independent of other data included in the universe
 - designed so that plausible alternative explanations for the results can be ruled out
8. Scholarly evidence indicates that while charter schools were originally cultivated by Albert Shanker and colleagues to be sites of innovation and rigorous research within the public school system, they have also become a source of population and resource competition to the detriment of both traditional and public charter schools. This circumstance tends to leaves the most vulnerable population of youth behind and no closer to our mutual goal of helping all Kansas youth achieve high standards ([Baker, 2013](#); [Minnesota Institute on Race and Poverty, 2008](#)).

National PTA Public Charter Schools Position Statement

National PTA supports public charter schools provided the authorizing bodies and schools reflect the positions and principles of National PTA in charters granted and implemented. National PTA supports legislation or policy decisions relating to charter schools that meet the following conditions:

Charter Authorizing Bodies must:

- Meet the highest level of accountability, beginning with the authorizing entity;
- Ensure transparent charter application, review, and decision-making processes;
- Meaningfully engage parents (any adult who has primary responsibility for the education and welfare of a child) in transparent authorizing, review, and decision-making processes, including the involvement of at least one parent on each charter school board;
- Engage in ongoing, comprehensive charter school data collection and evaluation processes, and make that information available to the public in a manner that complies with applicable state and federal laws; and
- Require performance-based charter contracts.

Public Charter Schools must:

- Be open to all students and free of both tuition charges and fees that exceed state or federal laws;
- Be supported by specifically allocated public funds in amounts that do not exceed and do not divert funding from non-charter public schools;
- Be legally organized as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization not affiliated with non-public sectarian, religious, or home-based school organizations;
- Adhere to all federal and state laws that protect the health and safety of children, prohibit discrimination, ensure access for all children, and comply with the Freedom of Information and Open Meetings Act;
- Comply with federal and state laws governing public schools that require fiscal transparency, responsibility and accountability;
- Provide all education stakeholders, including parents, with absolute transparency concerning both non-public funding sources and any external organization(s) with which the charter school enters into fee-for-service contract(s);
- Ensure that professional staff is certified for the position(s) they hold;

- Work collaboratively with parents to ensure meaningful family engagement in student learning and school success, including the presence of at least one parent on the charter school board; and
- Adhere to mechanism(s) for periodic, independent data collection and evaluation to determine alignment with provisions of the stated charter and ability to meet or exceed expectations required of non-charter public schools.

On behalf of the Kansas PTA, we thank you for your time and consideration.

References and Resources

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