

March 18, 2013

Testimony in support of HB 2373

Chairman Siegfried and members of the House Federal and State Affairs Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input on this important bill. My name is Jennifer Bagshaw, and I am the Indian Education Program Coordinator for Topeka Public Schools. As an advocate for Native American students, I am writing in support of House Bill No. 2373. Through my work with Native American students, I learned that there was an oversight when constructing the bill that allowed children who are in or have been in state custody and are at least 17 years of age to graduate on time if they meet the state established graduation credit requirements. This bill (HB2373) will amend the previous laws: K.S.A. 38-2388 and K.S.A. 38-2285 *to include children in Tribal Custody*. Just like children in other foster care systems, children in tribal custody are often at-risk for not graduating from high school. When children are placed in foster care, they are moved around a great deal, get behind in credits, become overwhelmed, and often give up because they see no hope of graduating. Without this amendment to the law, some of our Native American students will not graduate from high school, and thus not be equipped for post high school education or the work force. I strongly support this bill as it is another way for all of us to help ensure the success of our Native American students who have been faced with difficult circumstances at home and therefore have changed schools and are unable to complete coursework to attain credits.

There is a real urgency to pass this bill immediately so that those children who are seniors now, and meet the state custody graduation requirements, will be able to graduate in **May 2013**.

This bill will give our Native American students, who are in tribal custody, the same benefits that other foster care students receive.

Thank you for your consideration of this issue. Please expedite HB 2373 to the Governor's desk as soon as possible.