



Learning For All • Whatever It Takes

PO Box 370 - 123 N. Eisenhower - Junction City, KS 66441-0370
785.717.4000 — Fax 785.717.4003 www.usd475.org

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Chairman Abrams and members of the committee, my name is Ronald Walker, Superintendent, Geary County USD 475. Please allow me to express my gratitude for this opportunity to address SB 103. There is interest in my district as it relates to the proposed changes in current law as it relates to At-Risk funding for schools. I thank you for your time.

Our district currently uses funding from At-Risk to fund a variety of programs to include partial funding for all day kindergarten, provide summer school, offer tutoring for all schools in all grades, implement our Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) strategies, offer students credit recovery and assist with funding for bilingual education. All of these programs have been highly effective in our district. We have been very fortunate to improve our overall academic standing in our district for the most the at-risk students since 2006-2007. The impact of changing the definition of at-risk by removing all these programs from the funding cycle except for Pre-K-3 would cause us to lose many of the services due to a \$4 million drop in revenue. It will have the effect of causing our most needy students to be without many services. Under current law, we have the ability to target many students and to see them grow throughout the year. There is an equitable treatment of all students. A change in definition would mean we would have to wait for these students to be unsuccessful on the Kansas assessments before we would be able to offer services. I do not believe it is the intent of you as good legislators to reward poor academic performance as this bill will do. I would hope that the intent is to prepare all of our students in proactive ways that will give them the greatest opportunities for success. As a state, do we really want to have our students who find themselves in poverty, a member of a traditionally underserved group or other challenging groups to should an even greater burden? This is NOT the Kansas I have known for 10 years and the Kansas I believe in so strongly.

As a state, we have always provided equal access to education for all students and have led the nation in academics. As I read SB 103, I am not persuaded this is legislation that would enhance the learning environment for any student in the state. SB 103 will eventually cost the state more money as we move to a new set of assessments and are held to new standards. As with any new assessment, there is always an implementation dip. That dip could last for several years. Under the provisions of SB 103, the state could actually spend more money within the next few years than it currently does now.

It is my hope our state will decide to make an investment in the sound, preventive practices of the current at-risk fund and re-think the provisions of SB 103. I would hope there would not be a move to change the definition of at-risk in our state and place thousands of children in grades 4-12 further at-risk. I would also hope the state will maintain the support systems for children who may find themselves either permanently or temporarily at-risk due to reasons beyond their control.

It is for the reasons stated above that I humbly request SB 103 either not move forward or be sent to committee to study the effects it will have on our fine students in Kansas. Our students deserve a quality education. We are depending on you to make sure our state does not reduce the educational opportunities for those students who need the most help. I must humbly submit my testimony in opposition of SB 103 because I strongly believe all students deserve a chance at greatness!