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**Senate Education Committee SB 169**
**Marcy Clay, Assistant Superintendent**
**Kansas City, Kansas Public Schools**
Monday, February 25, 2013

I am testifying in opposition to SB 169, which would require school districts to retain in grade three students who are not proficient on the reading state assessment test for grade three. While I support the notion of high expectations for all students, this measure would have significant negative unintended consequences, and would not be good for children.

My first area of concern is that the State of Kansas does not have an accurate *reading* test as a part of the state assessment system, and the process of developing (or acquiring and implementing) one would be costly, time consuming, and extremely difficult to administer on a state-wide level. Reading comprehension is an extremely complex set of skills, and a student who struggles with reading may struggle with a variety of different deficits. Students may struggle with letter and word recognition, decoding, comprehension, fluency, etc. These different skills do not lend themselves well to a standardized assessment, and using an inappropriate assessment would result in the misidentification of children, with significant social and emotional costs to those children.

Perhaps even more importantly, if the goal is making sure that each student is able to acquire the skills they need to become a proficient reader, this bill does not nothing to assist in that process. The pace of development is unique for each child, and in our district, and in most districts in the state, classes are filled with students at many different levels, each with their own unique set of skills. A teacher **cannot** simply teach all of those students the same thing (the "3rd grade" curriculum, for example.) Rather, that teacher must know **each** of those students as a reader, and design instruction in a way that insures that each student receives support with the specific skills that they need. Thus, a student does not need to remain at a particular grade level, in order to acquire the skills necessary to make progress, and even to catch up with their peers.

Rather, what struggling students need is accurate diagnosis, individualized attention, and high quality instruction. Students who are considered "at-risk" because of poverty also need additional support in order to keep pace with their more advantaged peers, in the form of quality early learning experiences, including high quality Parents as Teachers and preschool programs, and high quality instruction from experienced, qualified teachers. Such an investment has a strong research base that demonstrates its effectiveness, and it does not result in the social and other consequences that come with student retention, which should only be used sparingly, in consultation with parents and teachers who know that student and their development well. For these reasons, I urge you to reject SB 169.

Senate Education Committee
Date 2-25-13
Attachment 11