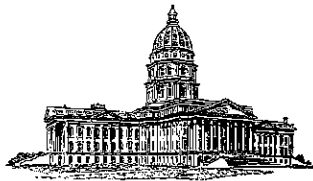


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TOPEKA

SENATE

Senate Education Committee

March 15, 2018

SB 424 – Support**Education Inspector General**

Chairman Baumgardner and committee members, thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of **SB 424**, a measure that would create the position of Education Inspector General.

This legislation will give Kansas citizens the assurance that their K-12 education tax dollars are being distributed according to state law. As we have recently become aware, a Legislative Post Audit study discovered the Kansas Department of Education misappropriated up to \$400 million in funds for education for over 30 to 45 years, revealing that the Kansas Legislature, for far too long, has not had proper accountability and transparency measures in place for over fifty percent of the state budget. This must be corrected to ensure there is integrity in the education funding system.

The education inspector general would be appointed by the state treasurer's office, responsible for writing checks to distribute state funds, including dollars for education. The person would have the knowledge, skills, abilities and experience to conduct audits or investigations. The complex education finance formula would then have oversight by two individuals – one from the State Board of Education and another from the State Treasurer's office. An education inspector general, coming from an independent government agency, would instill accountability back into the system.

The bill's language was copied from the Medicaid Inspector General statute, but instead of the appointment being made by the attorney general's office, which is mostly concerned with fraud, the appointment would be made by the state treasurer's office, which is concerned with the state's finances. The appointment would require confirmation by the State Senate.

The short-term outcome regarding the unlawful allocation of funds remains to be a serious consideration. But in addition, it is essential this situation not be allowed to happen again. It is the duty of the Legislature to assure Kansas taxpayers that the billions of dollars they spend for education funds is being spent according to their will established in state law. This is a needed measure that will insert transparency and accountability into the system. If our school finance system is to be trusted, it must not be under the purview of only one person.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify for this bill. I strongly urge your support.

Senator Mary Pilcher-Cook