



Kansas PTA
715 SW 10th Street, Topeka KS 66612
www.kansas-pta-legislative.org
kansaspta@gmail.com

February 18, 2019

Written Testimony to House Education Committee

Honorable Chair, Representative Steve Huebert

Deborah Bremer, Committee Assistant

(785) 296-1754, deborah.bremer@house.ks.gov

Room 286-N, State Capitol Building

Respectfully, oppose [House Bill 2233](#) – requiring school districts to provide a stipend for teachers to purchase classroom supplies.

Hearing: Monday, February 18, 2019, 1:30 PM Room 218-N

Honorable Chairman Huebert and Committee Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony on House Bill 2233. As we noted last week, the Kansas Parent Teacher Association (PTA) is a non-partisan, volunteer organization, whose mission is to make every child’s potential a reality by engaging and empowering families and communities to advocate for all children. Our members vote annually to approve a legislative platform that is used guide our interactions with the work of federal, state and local policymakers.

Instructional support for our students and teachers is important. Out-of-pocket expenditures from our educators and parents has been the norm, over these past many years of inadequately funded public schools, and relative to the rising educational outcomes expected. Not only do our teachers deserve classroom stipends, but competitive wages, reasonable class sizes and workloads, counselors, social workers and other instructional colleagues to meet the needs of today’s learners. Our opposition to this bill is not about providing our public school teachers with a stipend for classroom instructional materials, but rather with the lack of appropriations for this program as indicated in the fiscal note. Further, school districts would be required to reallocate limited general operating fund dollars for this specific program as the bill is written in its current form, bypassing the authority of local school boards and superintendents to make the most effective use of district resources. The Kansas Constitution, Article VI, gives oversight to the elected members of the state and local boards of education for the “general supervision of public schools, educational institutions and all the educational interests of the state, except educational functions delegated by law to the state board of regents (p. 26)”.¹ We ask that any decision regarding this level of budgetary allocation be made by local school boards. And if such a mandate were passed, the PTA would expect the Kansas legislature to uphold their constitutional obligation to provide suitable finance to our school districts, at the estimate cost of \$17,350,000.

These concerns align with two of our legislative priorities:²

Priority 1. Kansas PTA supports efforts to strengthen and improve the Kansas public school finance system, which includes legislation and policies that: b.) pursue solutions to fully fund state and federal educational mandates..., without disproportionately shifting the burden to local communities.

Priority 9. Kansas PTA will support efforts to preserve the Kansas Constitutional infrastructure for education, including nonpartisan elections of Kansas school board members and their appointment of our Education Commissioner, as well as, retaining the primary responsibility of defining the state education standards, as facilitated by the Kansas School Board, Kansas Department of Education, and with input from parents, education scholars, practitioners and other education stakeholders.

More importantly, the Kansas PTA respectfully asks that the 2019 Kansas legislature prioritize school finance this session. We urge a timely resolution of the Gannon school finance lawsuit. We ask that committee members support school finance bills that reflect the State Board of Education recommendations and are in keeping with the State's own argument to return to good standing under the *Montoy Safe Harbor*. The Governor's budget proposal accounts for this level of funding, and the plaintiffs have signaled conditional approval. For the past ten years, parents and educators alike have been asking the legislature to fulfill their constitutional obligation to our children's educational needs and the future of our state. Please make the school finance inflation fix your education policy priority this session. Parents will once again be able to rely on the state's investment in public education and to bank on the school doors being open each fall. Our district leaders and teachers will be in a better position to engage in long-term planning and to better optimize their use of finite resources.

Once the school finance formula is on solid footing, then we encourage the legislature to consider allocating an additional \$17 million for offset teacher out-of-pocket expenditures for classroom supplies. Again, we respectfully oppose HB 2233 in its current form and urge the legislature to prioritize a school finance bill first. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Monica Crowe, Kansas PTA President
kansaspta@gmail.com
[@KsPTALeg](https://www.facebook.com/KsPTALeg)

Cc: Lauri DeNooy, President-Elect
Brian Hogsett, VP of Advocacy
Devin Wilson, State Legislative Chair
Debbie Lawson, Advocacy Team
Mary Sinclair, PhD, Advocacy Team

THE PTA POSITION

Kansas PTA is a [nonpartisan](#) association that promotes the welfare of children and youth. The PTA does not endorse any candidate or political party. Rather, we advocate for policies and legislation that affect Kansas youth in alignment with our legislative platform and priorities. [PTA mission and purpose](#) have remained the same since our inception over 100 years ago, focused on facilitating every child's potential and empowering families and communities to advocate for all children.

¹ Kansas Constitution, Article VI https://www.kssos.org/other/pubs/KS_Constitution.pdf

² KS PTA Legislative Platform (2018-2019) http://www.kansas-pta-legislative.org/sites/default/files/2018KsPTALegPriorities_0.pdf ; see also our KS PTA Guiding Principles for a School Finance Formula (2016) http://www.kansas-pta.org/files/documents/KsPTASchFinPosition2016_Final.pdf