



Kansas PTA
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February 20, 2019

Written Testimony to House Education Committee

Honorable Chair, Representative Steve Huebert

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Room 286-N, State Capitol Building

Respectfully, oppose [House Bill 2183](#) – requiring a computer science course for high school graduation.

Hearing: Wednesday, February 20, 2019, 1:30 PM Room 218-N

Honorable Chairman Huebert and Committee Members,

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide written testimony on House Bill 2183. As we have noted previously, 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.

Technology literacy is an important competency for Kansas youth. Our primary opposition to this bill is not about the merits of offering computer science courses in our public schools, or financial literacy, but rather with the legislative mandate. This bill, as do several others introduced in this committee, imply that the legislature has the authority to determine high school graduation requirements and state education standards. Rather the Kansas Constitution, Article VI, gives oversight to the elected members of the State Board of Education to set the state education standards, credit requirements, accreditation and such “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 computer science requirements, standards or advisory boards, be addressed by the State Board of Education. And again if such a mandate is approved by the Board, 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 providing the opportunity for Kansas students to gain computer science competencies.

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: a.) upholds the state’s constitutional

obligations to make suitable provision for the finance of the Kansas public schools, achieving both equitable and adequate funding, as informed by actual costs ..., and 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.

Rather, the Kansas PTA respectfully urges 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.

Again, we respectfully oppose HB 2183 and urge the legislature to prioritize a school finance bill first. Thank you for your time and consideration.

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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