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Oral Testimony - Opponent  
Senate Bill 528  
Senate Committee on Education  
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Chairwoman Baumgardner, members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in opposition of Senate Bill 528.

Kansas NEA is not opposed to funds being provided to cover the cost of classroom supplies to offset what teachers traditionally pay out of pocket. In fact, we welcome it.

A 2019 Economic Policy Institute study estimates that teachers spend an average of \$459 nationally for classroom and student needs. They not only buy supplies that will be used that school year, but they invest in items that can be used for many years or they purchase food, clothing, and hygiene items for their students.

We oppose Senate Bill 528 because it creates a situation of “robbing Peter to pay Peter.” School districts would be required to set aside a portion of existing general fund monies to “reimburse” teachers up to \$250 for classroom supplies. This is the same pool of money that could otherwise be used for salaries and benefits. So, rather than giving this money to teachers in the form of a pay increase or to offset the cost of rising health insurance, this bill withholds the money to be used for limited classroom supplies.

Senate 528 stipulates that those supplies purchased under that \$250 reimbursement cannot be used beyond the current school year and cannot be consumable items, such as food. In other words, this reimbursement would be limited to items such as pencils, glue sticks, paper, markers, crayons, and so on for the current school year. This begs the question: What happens to the supplies purchased under the \$250 reimbursement and are not depleted by the end of the current school year? Would a teacher be disqualified from receiving a reimbursement the following year?

If the Legislature truly wants to help reimburse educators for out-of-pocket expenses, it should appropriate the estimated \$10 million (44,000 teachers x \$250) and earmark it to provide teachers with a legitimate reimbursement and establish clear and reasonable rules for accessing said reimbursements.

We agree with the committee that the dynamic of teachers using their hard-earned money to supplement their classroom needs has become far too routine and, at times, even expected. We thank the committee for consideration on this matter. However, we must ask you to oppose Senate Bill 528.