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Testimony to House Committee on Education

Honorable Chair, Representative Ron Highland, DVM, PhD

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Hearing, 1:30 pm Location: 112-N, Tues, Feb 16, 2016

Testimony Kansas PTA

Opposed to [HB2596](#) – Creating the classroom-based funding act

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony regarding HB2596 – creating the classroom-based funding act. While some elements of the bill have merit (e.g., routine cost students, consideration for cost of living adjustment), overall the proposed K12 school finance formula is out of alignment with Kansas PTA mission and legislative 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.
- [KS PTA Legislative Priority 1](#). Kansas PTA will support efforts to strengthen and improve the Kansas public school finance system, which includes legislation and policies that: a.) uphold Kansas Constitutional obligations to make suitable provision for the finance of the Kansas public schools that is equitable for every child; b.) restore state cuts to base state aid per pupil, back to levels comparable to those deemed suitable by the legislature - actual costs identified in research studies requested and authorized by the Kansas legislature (e.g., Legislative Post Audit 2006 Cost Study); c.) pursue solutions to fund state and federal educational mandates, including the new uniform financial accounting and reporting act, without disproportionately shifting the burden to local communities.

Several concerning issue arise from this bill, including:

- The proposed formula was drafted without broad, transparent input from the key education stakeholders across the state.
- The audit of total classroom costs does not appear to be judged as a function of whether the expenditure was sufficient to provide each student with the opportunity to achieve.
- The bill appears to take in the tax credit scholarship voucher-type program. PTA is opposed to the allocation of public funds to non-public schools who can be exclusive in their admissions and who are not held to same accountability requirements (pp. 39-40).
- This bill prevents districts and school boards from advocating on behalf of their students and community: "No school district shall expend, use, or transfer money from general fund of district for purpose of engaging in or supporting in any manner any litigation by the school district any person, assoc., corp., or entity, against the State of Kansas..." (p. 24)

The Kansas PTA would like to take this opportunity to refer back to [testimony presented to the K12 Special Committee](#) before the session began and to re-submit two recommendations, directed primarily at the process of developing a new school finance formula:

One, we ask that creation of a school finance formula involve the active participation of key stakeholders from across the state, facilitated by education experts and informed by rigorous research.

Two, we ask that each student's opportunity, to achieve state education standards and to meet the Rose Capacities, be the guiding criteria used to develop a new school finance formula. Essentially, we ask that actual costs drive the process, rather than allocation be driven by the amount of funds available.

The Kansas PTA bases these requests on the assumption that a school finance formula establishes the boundaries from within which any given school-age child has the opportunity to achieve education standards. Essentially, states have the sole capacity to ensure any parent can walk into their community school knowing the resources are available to help their child achieve and without fear of their child being turned away because of a learning or behavioral challenge, lack of transportation, religious affiliation, financial resources, or some other special need. Equity cannot be established with local and federal funds alone, nor through a system of privatization.

On behalf of the parents, teachers, and patrons of the Kansas PTA, we urge this committee to reconsider the process through which a new school finance formula can be development. Thank you for your time and consideration.

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Cc: Josh Halperin, VP of Advocacy
Devin Wilson, State Legislative Chair
Mary Sinclair, PhD, Kansas PTA 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.