



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

Testimony to Joint Meeting of both Judiciary Committees

Honorable Chairs, Senators Greg Smith, Jeff King and
Representatives John Barker and Charles Macheers
Robert G. Gallimore, Principal Research Analyst, Judiciary, Corrections, and
Juvenile Matters, Kansas Legislative Research, 785 296-3181
Public Comment, June 16, 2016, 2:30 pm, Old Supreme Court Room, 346-S

Testimony Kansas PTA

Proposed Constitutional Amendment Prohibiting School Closure or Other Potential Constitutional Amendments Pertaining to School Finance

Thank you for the opportunity to submit public comment. Again, please consider the importance of this testimony as critically as if we were able to present in person. As noted earlier today, we are a volunteer run organization and cannot always rearrange our schedules and get time off work, on such short notice – in addition to the time needed to prepare statements.

Kansas PTA is opposed to a constitutional amendment that would restrict a branch of government from fulfilling its duty. We encourage our elected officials to focus time and energy on resolving the issue at hand during this special session, rather than on changing the rules to nullify the problem.

Kansas PTA holds the position that the May 27 Gannon opinion on school finance was the act of an impartial court system fulfilling its constitutional obligation. The Courts have been responding to cases brought forth by plaintiffs who have been wronged, interpreting the law as established by statute and the constitution. The Gannon ruling is not a political statement, but a professional judgment from an equal branch of the Kansas government. The recent Gannon opinion should not be mischaracterized as a battle between Johnson County and Wichita (or any other region of the state, for that matter). The school finance debate, at its core, is about the role of public education in our democracy and whether or not all Kansas youth deserve the opportunity to acquire the knowledge and competences to productively participate and engage in society.

Kansas PTA will continue to advocate for investment in public education. Moving forward from this special session, PTA will continue to call for the establishment of a transparent and meaningful process to draft a new school finance formula. We expect this new formula process to involve all key education stakeholders, to yield a working definition of the term suitable, and to identify a routine procedure for updating the cost of providing all youth the opportunity to achieve the state education standards. Kansas PTA supports a school finance formula that provides adequate and equitable opportunity for all youth and school communities to achieve regardless of their readiness, disability, language, wealth or geography.

On behalf of the parents, teachers, and community members of Kansas PTA, we ask that you withdraw consideration of a constitutional amendment, in 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 3](#). 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 phrase intellectual, educational, vocational and scientific improvement with the education governance structure (Kansas School Board, Kansas Department of Education, education scholars and practitioners).

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Denise Sultz, Kansas PTA President
kansaspta@gmail.com
[@KsPTALeg](#)

Cc: Josh Halperin, VP of Advocacy
Devin Wilson, State Legislative Chair
Mary Sinclair, PhD, Team Advocate

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.