



Kansas PTA
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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, 10:45 am, Old Supreme Court Room, 346-S

Testimony Kansas PTA

Potential School Funding Changes in Response to the May 27, 2016, Gannon Opinion

Thank you for the opportunity to submit public comment. Please consider the importance of this testimony as critically as if we were able to present in person. 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 urges our elected officials to use this additional opportunity for meaningful resolution, to focus on the equitable contribution towards and allocation of state aid to our K12 public schools without pitting communities against one another. We also hope that this is a pure attempt to solve the equity portion without changes to education policy as a means of securing votes.

We are of the position that the state's inequity issue is primarily a function of inadequate state aid for the operational functions of public education and by a self-imposed budget crisis that stems from the 2012 tax policy designed to eliminate income taxes. The inequity problem was never found to be a function of the 1992 school finance formula. Rather, inequities grew as state aid for the classrooms shrunk, as the financial burden on local communities increased and the means left to backfill declining state aid were contorted.

In Kansas, the suitable finance of public education is a constitutional obligation of the legislature. As the primary revenue source for state aid is the State General Fund (SGF), we ask committee members to keep in mind that the \$435 million SGF education budget shortfall that derailed the *Montoy* school finance resolution following the Great Recession was never restored. This gap intensified in 2012 following the intentional policy choice to eliminate income taxes in favor of total reliance on other taxes. This significant policy change has resulted in a \$1 billion reduction in state revenues with offsetting increases not realized. Prior to 2012,

nearly half of the SGF was generated from personal income taxes. Steps to eliminate half the state revenue stream has resulted in significant reductions in K12 operational budgets, along with all other investments in beneficial and necessary services and programs.

Kansas PTA will continue to advocate for an investment in public education, at a level which provides public schools with the funds needed to cover the actual costs of providing each child with the opportunity to achieve the state education standards. In alignment with our [legislative platform and priorities 1 and 2](#) (noted below), Kansas PTA supports a school finance formula that provides equitable and adequate opportunity for all youth and school communities to achieve regardless of their readiness, disability, language, wealth or zip code.

On behalf of the parents, teachers, and community members of Kansas PTA, we ask that you consider our testimony as you deliberate a resolution to the current inequities in state aid for K12 public education:

- [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.
- 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. Pursue solutions to fully fund state and federal educational mandates, without disproportionately shifting the burden to local communities.
- Legislative Priority 2. Kansas PTA will support efforts to restore an equitable and balanced tax policy to maintain a reliable revenue stream for public education. A policy which draws upon income, property and sales taxes has been proven by history to be a secure and sustainable approach. Kansas PTA opposes provisions limiting the growth of government before public education is fully funded to statutory levels.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

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Cc: Josh Halperin, VP of Advocacy
Devin Wilson, State Legislative Chair
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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.

