



everychild.onevoice.®

Kansas PTA

715 SW 10th Street, Topeka KS 66612

www.kansas-pta-legislative.org ■ kansaspta@gmail.com

WRITTEN only Testimony to House Education Committee

Chair, Representative Ron Highland

Tuesday, January 19, 2016

Sue E. Mollenkamp, Committee Assistant, 785-296-7310

Sue.Mollenkamp@house.ks.gov

1:30 pm Room 112-N

RE: Oppose proposed teacher merit pay.

Chairman Highland and Committee Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on behalf of the Kansas PTA membership. We are hopeful that the resolution of public education debates this 2016 session, whether focused on teacher merit pay or the development of a new school finance formula, will move forward in a non-partisan manner and in partnership with all key education stakeholders ([Joint Statement of KASB, USA, KSSA, KNEA on start of 2016 Legislative Session](#), [KS PTA Action Alert](#)).

The Kansas PTA is here today to express concerns about the pursuit of teacher merit pay and to note that Kansas already authorizes districts to acknowledge extraordinary effort of Kansas teachers via the Governor's Teaching Excellence Scholarships and Awards Program.

The education community, practitioners and scholars alike, dismissed the notion of teacher merit pay decades ago as an ineffective motivational strategy. Of the variety of problems and fatal flaws, several reasons merit pay was disregarded are noted here:

- Merit pay creates a culture of competition in a learning environment that demands collaboration and cooperation ([cooperative learning](#)).
- Operationalizing the definition of a 'good' teacher is highly complex and varies depending upon the needs of student body and community ([effective teachers and teaching](#)).
- Student achievement is influenced by teachers yes, but also by a multitude of other factors. ([multiple factors](#)).
- Merit pay undermines and threatens the teaching of challenging youth.
- Implementation of merit pay is logistically unfeasible and cost prohibitive, from the development of assessments and collection of data to the allocation of merit.

The apparent omission of educational expertise and research is likely to yield unintended consequences that would cost Kansans more in the long run and threaten the constitutional obligation to provide all youth to opportunity to achieve.

If the intent of proposing and/or mandating teacher merit pay is to "... to attract and retain good teachers" ([K-12 Report](#), p.2, 11), evidenced-based research suggests key retention factors are moderated largely by teachers working conditions and capacity for professional communities ([Borman & Dowling, 2008](#)).

The existing Governor's Program operates as part of the [National Board Certification](#) program, a joint initiative of American Federation of Teachers and The National Education Association and thus supported by the teachers unions. However, Governor Brownback and Kansas legislators have not funded this program since 2011 and nor has it ever been fully funded. Perhaps the current statute could be fully funded and evaluated along with the reinstatement of policies more aligned with [professional communities](#) (e.g., due process, teaching mentoring, sufficient resources to invest in common planning periods and prep time), before moving on to some other program and one that the education community dismissed decades ago for a variety of practical and evidence-based reasons.

Thank you for your consideration.

Denise Sultz, Kansas PTA President

KansasPTA@gmail.com

www.kansas-pta-legislative.org

[@KsPTALeg](#)

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

The mission and values of the PTA have remained the same since our inception over 100 years ago:

PTA Mission - to facilitate every child's potential by engaging and empowering families and communities to advocate for all children.

Through advocacy, as well as family and community education over the century, PTA has established programs and [called for legislation](#) that improves our children's lives including: the creation of kindergarten classes, child labor laws, public health service, hot and healthy lunch programs, juvenile justice system, mandatory immunization, arts in education and school safety.

Kansas PTA is a [nonpartisan association](#) that promotes the welfare of children and youth. 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](#).