

## Unified School District No. 219

P.O. Box 157, Minneola, KS 67865-0157

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Dear Chairperson Williams and K-12 Committee,

Thank you for dedicating your time to review my written testimony on HB2612. Upon my examination of this bill, it seems to assume that school districts are not adhering to established laws.

I firmly believe that the state legislature should empower the State Board of Education to fulfill its designated responsibilities. School accreditation goes beyond mere numerical indicators or disagreements on financial allocations and reporting procedures. Schools are obligated to comply with state laws and regulations set by the State Board of Education. In cases where schools do not exhibit growth or meet expectations, districts are granted an opportunity to assess their processes while receiving guidance and support from the Kansas State Department of Education (KSDE). Accreditation significantly impacts every student in a school district and should not be wielded as punitive measures based on differing interpretations of the law. Accreditation should remain under the jurisdiction of KSDE, which is equipped with the staff, skills, understanding, and experience in collaboration with schools and school districts – providing the necessary resources to support all schools.

In regards to lawfulness and interpretation of law, one might question why the legislature has been able to contravene the law for so many years by not fully funding special education. Considering the historical context of the Kansas budget, it raises concerns that it took multiple lawsuits before the legislature fully funded general education – potentially due to varying interpretations of what constitutes full funding. Let's not entangle schools in the middle of interpreting laws; rather, let them focus on their primary role of educating students.

In summary, schools are overseen by the State School Board and locally elected boards of education. I urge you to permit our local boards to monitor local schools. If there are instances of intentional law-breaking, I am confident that our boards can address the issue effectively.

Regards,



**Luke M. Ritchie, principal**

~ serving public education since 2007

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