

Chairperson Williams and K-12 committee,

Thank you for taking time to read to my testimony on HB2612. As I reviewed this bill, there must be an assumption that school districts are not following established laws. I serve Atchison Public Schools as Vice-President of the School Board. Yesterday, we passed a Bond Issue with a two-to-one margin and are looking forward to completing some major renovations, including secure entries in our buildings, new HVAC systems and new roofs, and more. We plan diligently for our public schools.

I believe the state legislature should allow the State Board of Education to perform their established duties. School accreditation is more than a series of numbers or a disagreement on how dollars should be used or how a report should be completed. Schools are required to follow state laws and State Board of Education regulations. If schools don't show growth or meet the expectations, districts are provided the opportunity to review the process while KSDE provides guidance and support. Accreditation affects every student in a school district and should not be used as a punitive punishment based on the interpretation of a law. Accreditation should remain in the hands of the department who have the staff, skills, understanding, and experience working with schools and school districts; the resources to support all schools.

Another concern with the bill is a state audit must be performed by KSDE to reinstate the district to accredited status. The auditors are already overwhelmed with the caseload so adding to their duties will only diminish the fidelity of their work.

One could ask why the legislature has been able to break the law for so many years by not fully funding special education? As a special education teacher for over 30 years, I know the past history of the Kansas budget, the lawsuits, and the struggles to fully fund special education. Schools should not be caught up in the middle of interpreting the laws and divert them from their role of educating the students. School Boards should be focused on the education of students.

In summary, the schools are governed by the State School Board and LOCALLY elected boards of education. Please allow the UD 409 School board to monitor what is happening in our district. I can assure you that if a law is being broken, we will resolved the issue in our community. We were elected to solve problems and move our district forward.

Sincerely,

Diane Liebsch

Atchison Public Schools – USD 409

Vice-President of the Board