From: John West
To: K12 Budget
Subject: HB 2650 written testimony
Date: Friday, February 2, 2024 11:24:45 AM

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Dear Representative Goetz and Committee,

I am writing to express my profound concern regarding the legislative actions that have been taken over the past couple of decades, which appear to be undermining public education in Kansas. As a citizen deeply invested in the well-being of our state's educational system, I find it disheartening to witness policies that seem to prioritize other agendas over the foundational institution of public schooling.

Public education is the cornerstone of our society, providing equal opportunities for all children regardless of their socioeconomic background. It not only imparts essential knowledge and skills but also fosters critical thinking, social cohesion, and civic engagement. However, the recent legislative trends have raised serious alarms about the future of our public schools.

The systematic underfunding of public education, coupled with the proliferation of policies favoring privatization and voucher programs, has led to widening disparities and diminished resources for our public schools. These actions not only jeopardize the quality of education but also exacerbate inequality by diverting taxpayer funds away from the very institutions meant to serve all students.

Furthermore, the erosion of teacher rights and autonomy, coupled with an overemphasis on standardized testing, has resulted in a stifling learning environment that prioritizes rote memorization over genuine intellectual curiosity and creativity. Our educators, who play an invaluable role in shaping the minds of future generations, deserve better support and respect from policymakers.

As a concerned citizen, I urge you to reconsider the trajectory of our state's education policies and prioritize the interests of our students and educators above all else. Investing in public education is not only a moral imperative but also an economic necessity, as a well-educated populace is essential for the prosperity and progress of our state.

I implore you to advocate for legislation that strengthens public education, ensures equitable funding, supports our educators, and promotes policies that nurture the holistic development of every child. Together, we can work towards a future where every student in Kansas has access to a high-quality education that empowers them to fulfill their

potential and contribute meaningfully to society.

The proposed HB 2650 simply exacerbates the issue of school funding by penalizing districts. Those that most need At Risk funding find their resources threatened. This can only further erode public education and democracy itself. I know that schools struggle to find qualified teachers. The constant attacks on public education are one of the most commonly cited reasons I hear when I ask people why they do not study to become a teacher. This bill is simply one of dozens introduced annually that aim to destroy public education. An educated electorate is a cornerstone of democracy. I personally view the attacks upon public education as attacks upon democracy. Please think about your actions, your words, and your motivations.

Thank you for your attention to this urgent matter. I look forward to seeing positive changes that uphold the promise of public education in our state.

Sincerely,

John West
Buffalo, Kansas