



Superintendent
620-885-4372

9-12 Principal
620-885-4611

PreK-8 Principal
620-885-4571

February 1, 2024

Chairperson Williams and K-12 committee,

Thank you for taking time to listen to my written testimony on HB2612. As I reviewed this bill, there must be an assumption that school districts are not following established laws.

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. At Minneola, the staff spent six years focusing on the locally selected goals and state board outcomes. We were accredited last year due to the dedication of staff over many years addressing the needs of our students, staff, and school. This journey continues each year, not just the year of accreditation. Please don't undermine our efforts by making law interpretations more important. What matters is that accreditation should remain in the hands of the department who have the staff, skills, understanding, and experience working with schools and school districts.

Another concern with the bill is a state audit must be performed by KSDE to reinstate the district to accredited status. Every auditor I have ever worked with only sees numbers. They pay no attention as to why our numbers might have changed. The auditors especially our local ones 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? Knowing the history of the Kansas budget, why did it take multiple lawsuits before the legislature fully funded general education? Possibly because of the discrepancy in interpretation of what is fully funded. Don't get schools caught up in the middle of interpreting the laws and divert them from their role of educating the students.

In summary, the schools are governed by the State School Board and LOCALLY elected boards of education. Please allow our local boards to monitor educators and the daily work they perform. If they are intentionally breaking the law, let the locally elected boards handle the issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Lance Custer".

Lance Custer

Superintendent of Schools Minneola USD219