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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 and even more so that school districts are intentionally breaking laws.

The job of the State Board of Education is to establish regulations and to ensure that schools are adhering to the laws and regulations. The state legislature is implying that the state board is not doing their job, but then throughout the bill puts additional responsibilities on them to allow schools to regain accreditation. If you are under the impression, they are unable to do their job, then what sense does it make to add to their responsibilities. Instead, the state legislature should allow the State Board of Education to actually perform their established duties. The requirement of maintaining accreditation is more than numbers or report compliance. As mentioned above school districts are required to follow the laws of the state and the regulations of the State Board. If a school fails to show student progress, district progress, or meet the expectations, then the district is provided an opportunity to review the status and obtain feedback and guidance from the State Department on how to improve.

Accreditation affects every student in a school district and to have accreditation held as a punitive action based on the interpretation of the law, is unfair and only hurts the students. The comprehensive model that the State Board of Education uses to monitor schools is broad enough as to ensure schools are constantly looking for ways to improve for the betterment of ALL students. If interpreting the law was so simple, then I would venture to say there would not be historical and current confusion on how to fund not only public education but special education. The State Board of Education is quite capable of doing their job and accreditation should remain in the hands of the department who has the staff, skills, understanding, and 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. School districts are audited multiple times per year as is, some audits focus on money, but others on compliance and progress. There is much more to evaluate in a district than just raw data. You must look at the entire picture, the state department has the ability to do that very thing.

Again, I would like to refer to the importance of "interpreting the law". As I said before if laws were so easily interpreted, then I am very confused as to why there has been a need for multiple lawsuits before the state legislature would fund education to the fulfillment of the law. Is it because they simply do not want to or because there are various ways to interpret the law. As a 22-year educator, I have been astonished of how hard schools must fight just to get the funding that is stated in law that they are to receive. As a Special Education educator, that astonishment is amplified as the law clearly states one thing and yet the state has not come close to funding that for many years. I would be in jail if I opted to not follow the laws that I did not agree with. So, with that, I think it best to not continue to get schools caught in the crossfires of discrepancies of interpreting the law when they should be focused on educating students and making progress for all students.

In summary, the schools are governed by the State School Board and LOCALLY elected boards of education. Schools should be allowed the local control that the systems are in place to support. Allow our local boards to monitor educators and the daily work they perform. If they are intentionally breaking the law, I'm sure our boards can handle the issue. Allow the State Board of Education to do their job. Allow the Local School Boards to do their job. Allow us to educate kids.

Sincerely,

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