

February 13, 2024

Testimony to the House K-12 Education Budget Committee

NAME: Lesa Childers

TITLE: Kansas Citizen

EMAIL ADDRESS: lesa.childers@outlook.com

BILL NUMBER: HB 2738

PROPONENT, OPPONENT, or NEUTRAL: Opponent

ORAL or WRITTEN ONLY TESTIMONY: Written

Dear Chair & members of the committee,

I am a mother of a thirteen-year-old currently receiving special education services in the Shawnee Mission School District. I am firmly opposed to HB 2738.

My daughter's special education program has allowed her to beat the odds and become a fluent reader, despite her intellectual disability. But she continues to need specialized, individualized support as she masters spelling. She wants to write her own emails and send messages to friends. She needs that and many other essential skills to thrive in her community. She and others like her need you to stand up for them. They need you to make sure that her teachers and paras are paid well enough to attract high quality candidates. They need you to make sure her district doesn't have to drain the general fund to pay for special education services, which means they face larger general education classes and teachers experiencing a lot of stress.

The most vulnerable kids in our state are depending on you to let the Special Education task force do the job it was appointed to do. Let them advise on how much funding is truly needed to help our vulnerable kids be their best selves.

Consider why you were elected. One of the things you were elected to do is to ensure that tax dollars go where they are needed. The state has a budget surplus. You know that the state can afford to fully educate our kids with special needs.

Any attempts at changing the current method of calculating the state's share of special education funding should be vetted by experts and stakeholders. This bill creates a completely new way of calculating funding without careful review or thoughtful consideration of its impacts.

It is time for the state to meet its obligation to fund 92% of excess special education costs. School districts, the State Board of Education, and the Kansas Department of Education all recognize that special education hasn't been fully funded since 2011. The shortfall has grown to an estimated \$173 million.

Please vote no on HB 2738 and refer it to the Task Force for further review.

In the meantime, please follow the phase-in plans proposed by the Governor or the State Board of Education to fully fund special education. Our schools will not be fully funded until special education is fully funded.

Lesa Childers, Kansas resident, Merriam

