

February 13, 2024

Testimony to the House K-12 Education Budget Committee

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TITLE: Kansas Citizen

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BILL NUMBER: HB 2738

PROPONENT, OPPONENT, or NEUTRAL: Opponent

ORAL or WRITTEN ONLY TESTIMONY: Written Only Testimony

Dear Chair & members of the committee,

I am writing to voice my opposition to bill HB 2738.

I have three children in the Blue Valley School District – one in middle school who is part of the gifted program, and two in high school who are not part of the gifted program. The legislature's failure to fully fund special education takes resources away from all three of my children. My child who participates in the gifted program deserves a fully funded program to support the programs his teachers create to continue to challenge him and keep him engaged in his education. And my other two children deserve the full allotment of resources that should be allocated to them for their education and funds should not have to be diverted away from them to fund special education.

It is incredibly frustrating to me to watch our state representatives continue to ignore the requests to fully fund special education and focus on initiatives that do not benefit anyone.

As for this latest attempt - there has not been any analysis done to support this newest proposal. 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.

This bill provides no additional funding this year or in future years. Failure to provide adequate funding hurts all of our kids in public schools as districts must transfer money from their general education funds to cover the shortfall.

A Special Education Task Force was created for the purpose of reviewing the current method of funding and determining if any changes are needed. 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.

Amy Hill
Olathe, KS