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Testimony to the House K-12 Education Budget Committee

Emily Meissen-Sebelius

Kansas Citizen, Parent of children in public school and special education

emsebelius@gmail.com

HB 2738

Opponent

Written Only Testimony

Dear Chair & members of the committee,

I am writing to urge you to vote no on HB 2738 and voice my opposition, as a parent of children in the public education system and receiving special education services.

First of all, the state should be doing everything in it's power to fully fund special education. We are able to do this now, without changing or rewriting the formula, at the current amount specified in statute. Furthermore, a Special Education Task Force was created for the purpose of reviewing the current funding formula and determining if any changes are needed. **Please vote no on HB 2738 and refer it to the Task Force for further review.** I believe that any changes to 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.

This is incredibly important to me as a parent of a child who receives special education services. But it is also important to me because I have two other children in the public school system, and failing to fully fund special education siphons dollars away from all children, by forcing districts to cover the shortfall. I believe public schools benefit the entire community and state, as evidenced by the desire for families to live and businesses to locate in areas with quality public schools. We should be supporting and funding them at levels that allow continued quality and success.

I can personally speak to the benefits of special education, as my own child has thrived after being evaluated for special education services and receiving them. It has helped her immensely to grow academically and in terms of critical thinking and life skills. I am incredibly grateful for the services and the qualified instructors she has been able to receive services from.

HB 2738 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. As a parent, I also support full funding special education

funding because of the real impact shortfalls in this funding have on the entire district. Our district has been covering the shortfall in special education funding, and each year this amount increases. This means the funds to provide all needed special education services comes from our general fund budget. These funds from the general budget would otherwise be used for teachers, paras, instructional materials and other important resources that benefit all children- including those not receiving special education services.

Lastly, as a lifelong Kansas resident, I strongly believe that public schools are the bedrock of our communities, in our rural, suburban and urban areas of the state. As a family, we chose to live in Kansas, and Johnson County, specifically because of the high quality public schools. Strong public schools attract quality businesses and employers, as well as create a robust future workforce for our state. This benefits our entire state. To this end, the legislature should be looking for any ways possible to protect and enhance funding for special education services and for our public school system.

Thank you for your consideration, and sincere thank you for your service to our great state.

Emily Meissen-Sebelius  
Parent of children in Shawnee Mission School District  
Prairie Village Ks.