

**February 12, 2024**

**Testimony to the House K-12 Education Budget Committee**

**NAME:** Debra J. Schneider

**EMAIL ADDRESS:** debschneider49@gmail.com

**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.

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 kids in public schools as districts must transfer money from their general education funds to cover the shortfall.

As a substitute teacher in the Shawnee Mission School District, I've seen first-hand the chaos that underfunded special education causes. Lack of paraprofessionals in the classroom, teacher burnout at a high rate and, most importantly, the students in these classes suffering because of this. I subbed for a second-year special education teacher this year. She is 25 years old and is trying to transfer out of special education, the career in which she spent 7 years pursuing a degree, because of the lack of support she receives in teaching these precious kids. It's heartbreaking to see a young, energetic teacher, who loves her kids, feel beaten down daily due to the lack of current support and the even greater lack of support she sees coming in the future.

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.

Debra Schneider

Kelly Employee Substitute Teacher

Prairie Village, KS 66207

---