



Oral opponent testimony

On SB 14, Providing for continuous state budget

By

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Chair Waymaster and Members of the Committee,

KASB appears today with significant concerns regarding the potential impact of SB 14 as applied to the K-12 budget. Our opposition is firmly grounded in our members' legislative priorities regarding predictable, sustainable, and adequate funding for public schools:

Adequate and Equitable Funding of Public Schools

- We support suitable finance provided by the Kansas Legislature, including continued implementation of the constitutionally suitable school funding and inflationary adjustments approved by the Legislature, the Governor, and the Kansas Supreme Court.
- We support the renewal of the current constitutional school finance formula, which has been deemed adequate and equitable by the Kansas Supreme Court, by eliminating the sunset provision. Maintaining the structure and approach of this constitutional formula will provide critical stability and continuity for Kansas school districts and their communities, supporting the vital role that our public schools play as community hubs and centers of community connections and activities.
- The formula should efficiently and effectively meet the planning and funding needs of all districts—those that are growing in enrollment as well as those that are stable or declining in enrollment. This is especially important given the uncertainties in forecasting enrollment that now exist because of the current non-resident enrollment procedures districts are required to follow.

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When this bill was heard in Senate Ways and Means, legislative staff referenced the bill's required procedures for reallocations if the continuous budget were in effect. With K-12 funding, money is first taken from the School District Finance Fund, and the remainder of the needed funds are then appropriated from the state general fund. It is unclear from the text of the bill and the staff explanation how this might work under SB 14, if the amount in the School District Finance Fund changed meaningfully from one year to the next. It could result in a significant underfunding of the school finance formula, if the previous year's SGF appropriation was less than what would be needed to fill that gap the following year.

The provisions of the bill are triggered if a budget has not been enacted by July 1 of the fiscal year. By July, school district staff contracts are in place and in force for the coming year, and the statutory deadline for adjusting staffing has long passed. Because SB 14 does not account for changes in the education caseloads from year to year, this likely would create a fiscal crisis for public schools if the bill's provisions were triggered by a failure to pass a budget bill.

SB 14 introduces instability and a lack of predictability in the K-12 budget process by giving the Legislature and the Governor an "out" for failing to agree on a budget for the following fiscal year using the normal legislative processes and procedures. It could also be used, by agreement, to cut the education budget without actually passing a budget specifically making such cuts. KASB's members believe that the policymaking process around the budget, as with all issues before the legislature, should be transparent; it should account for the actual costs of providing mandated services and the quality of education that legislators, students, families and communities expect; and it should provide predictability from year to year for planning purposes. SB 14, as we understand it would operate with respect to K-12 caseloads, undercuts those goals.

We respectfully ask the Committee to reject SB 14 in its current form.

Thank you.

KASB is a non-profit service organization built on an abiding belief in Kansas public schools. We have put the needs of students and K-12 leaders first since 1917.