



**Oral opponent testimony on
SB 49
Needs assessment
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Madam Chair and Members of the Committee,

KASB appears today in opposition to SB 49. As always, our testimony is grounded in our member-approved legislative platform.

Our permanent policy states:

School Board Authority and Accountability

As the constitutional authority charged with the management of local schools, the school board is accountable to district patrons through the electoral process and must be the final authority on local management decisions for expenditures, personnel, facilities, and programs.

Our 2025 State Resolution provides:

Local Control of Public Schools

In addition, Article 6, Section 5 states, "Local public schools under the general supervision of the state board of education shall be maintained, developed and operated under locally elected boards."

- *We support management of public schools under locally elected boards of education, including setting curriculum, staffing, financial management and policies, so that such schools can progress and meet State Board standards.*

We also respectfully observe that the needs assessment statute is settled law, so this bill is irrelevant.

The building needs assessment process looks vastly different across 286 Kansas school districts. Our largest districts have 20 or more schools, while the smallest educate all students in a single building. They're united, however, in their dedication to ensuring every Kansas child has the knowledge and skills they need to be successful in careers, college, and life.

Not only do our districts vary by size, but they also vary in the number and types of challenges that affect student success. Many districts have high concentrations of poverty or other societal challenges, which affect how school boards dedicate resources. Other districts use the budgeting process to address the challenges of the high numbers of students with serious mental health needs. In this complex environment, our boards work with principals and superintendents to assess needs and ensure the best outcomes for Kansas kids.

We're proud that a record 90 percent of Kansans are graduating from high school. In many districts, that rate is even higher.

A high school diploma alone sets Kansans up for economic and personal improvement, but when we couple a diploma with the record numbers of high school students earning career credentials, it's clear that Kansas school boards have been working hard to ensure that students are prepared to fill high-paying, in-demand jobs.

On the academic success front, the annual announcement of Kansas National Merit Scholars reflects how Kansas school boards dedicate resources to academic achievement to prepare kids for college and careers. Each year, Kansas high schoolers earn hundreds of millions of dollars in college scholarships. State assessment scores are climbing after COVID, and boards continue to devote resources to moving students out of Level 1. The Kansas Blueprint for Literacy is an historic commitment to preparing our kids for success in school and in life.

Just last week, the Senate honored several school district programs that arose from the needs assessment budgeting process:

- In Olathe, the school district has responded to community expectations by establishing career academies. Each year, in honor of those lost in the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks, Olathe West High School fire academy students climb more than 300 flights of stairs while in full gear. Not only are those students preparing for careers, but they are also showing patriotism and good citizenship.

- In Wichita USD 259, a robust Junior ROTC program equips students with leadership skills and prepares them for honorable careers in military service.

- In the Kansas City Kansas USD 500 school district, the budgeting process supports the Wyandotte High School Architecture, Construction, and Engineering career pathway that prepares students for successful careers after high school graduation. The students give back to their community by donating building projects to local nonprofits. They're currently working on a house that will be sold at an affordable price to meet local housing needs.

Other examples of local boards' budgeting for student success include:

- In 2024, a Wellsville High School student earned National Champion in Job Interview at the national Future Business Leaders of America competition.

- In Oakley USD 274, high school students run the Palace Community movie theater in cooperation with local business sponsors. Students learn important business and life skills, and the 2,000-member rural community enjoys having an affordable, family-friendly movie theater.

These examples reflect how school boards across Kansas, from our largest communities to some of the smallest, urban to rural, dedicate resources to ensure students succeed in academics, careers, and in life. They consider family and community expectations and the rapidly changing business environment in addition to the testing data required by law.

We invite the committee and all Kansas legislators to check in with their local public schools to learn how they budget to address local needs. We believe you'll see that solutions for student success are most effective when they begin at the local level rather than a top-down mandate.

KASB looks forward to working with the legislature to continue to support Kansas public schools.

Thank you.