



**Oral Proponent Testimony on
HB 2086, Adjusting the KPERS Tier 3 investment return
Senate Financial Institutions and Insurance Committee**

**By
Shannon Kimball
Government Relations Specialist**

**Kansas Association of School Boards
skimball@kasb.org**

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Chair Dietrich and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to appear in support of HB 2086. Helping our public schools recruit and retain teachers and education support staff is one of the top 5 legislative priorities for KASB's members in the 2025 session. KASB's member-adopted 2025 state legislative priorities emphasize that improvements to KPERS are critical for the future of the teaching profession in Kansas:

Recruiting and Retaining Excellent Educators and Support Staff

Exploring ways to address staff shortages, including:

- **Supporting efforts to improve KPERS and to create flexibility within KPERS to enhance the recruitment and retention of school district staff. These efforts should address reducing or eliminating the “working after retirement” penalty and improving retirement benefits for educators and education support staff by moving staff from KPERS Tier 3 to Tier 2.**

(emphasis added).

When the KASB staff traveled across Kansas on our 2024 Legislative Listening Tour, school board members consistently expressed significant concerns about teacher and education support staff recruitment and retention. These same concerns were expressed by our members during our 2023 listening tour as well; as a result, improving KPERS has been a multi-year priority for KASB's members.

One of the most important retention strategies local board members raised repeatedly, in communities across the state, was a strong interest in improving KPERS retirement benefits for current and future district staff. An improved retirement benefit would not only attract young people to the profession but also encourage experienced teachers to remain in the classroom.

The feedback from KASB members aligns with the results of the February 2024 LPA report on the KPERS 3 plan, which pointed out the significant shortcomings of Tier 3 and the need for change to ensure that the retirement system serves its intended purpose.

Improving KPERS is particularly critical, given the ongoing teacher shortage in Kansas. As data presented to the State Board of Education in October 2024 shows, Kansas faces a growing shortage of teachers. Public school teaching vacancies have risen from 1,628 at the beginning of the 2022-23 school year, to 1,954 in fall 2024. In the last decade, the number of students entering teacher preparation programs nationwide has declined by as much as 45%. Without robust efforts to improve KPERS, strategies to turn the tide on these growing shortages will continue to fall short of meeting the needs of our Kansas children for high-quality educators and support staff.

Thank you for considering HB 2086. The bill is a step in the right direction toward improving retirement benefits for teachers and education support staff. We encourage the committee to pass the bill out favorably.

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.