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KANSAS NATIONAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION / 715 SW 10TH AVENUE / TOPEKA, KANSAS 66612-1686

Lori Greenfield  
Elementary Classroom Educator  
Oral Testimony – Proponent  
Senate Committee on Financial Institutions and Insurance  
House Bill 2086  
Date: March 6, 2025

Chairperson Dietrich and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in favor of HB 2086

I am Lori Greenfield, and my pronouns are she/her. I grew up on a family farm near Great Bend, Kansas, which has been in our family for over 100 years. Now, I am the small-town girl who spends her days as a 3rd-grade veteran elementary educator at Prairie Park Elementary in Lawrence. As a proud union member of the Kansas National Education Association (KNEA), I've held leadership roles at local, state, and national levels. Currently, I represent KNEA on the National Education Association's (NEA) Resolution Committee and serve as the KNEA Resolutions Commission Chair. Beyond the classroom, I'm deeply involved in my Lawrence community. Above all, I am dedicated to serving the students, families, and educators of Kansas. I am committed to advocating for both our students and the education profession, ensuring we are all lifelong learners.

When considering a career and workplace, individuals typically evaluate salary, benefits, retirement options, and work conditions. Unfortunately, many of these factors are lacking within the education field, making it difficult to attract people to pursue teaching as a profession. On top of these challenges, educators are facing increasing criticism and attacks from multiple levels, further discouraging potential candidates from entering the profession.

In 2021, KNEA adopted a robust amended resolution on retirement that states, in part:

*E-2-3. RETIREMENT: Kansas NEA believes that the Kansas Public Employees Retirement System (KPERS) should provide a retirement benefit of no less than 70 percent of an educational employee's final average salary (calculated from the three highest years), regardless of Social Security benefits. KNEA further believes that any retirement plan offered by KPERS should provide an annual benefit adjustment to maintain the purchasing power of the original benefit.*

Educator recruitment and retention is a significant challenge across Kansas, with many districts creating specific positions dedicated to addressing these issues. One key obstacle to recruitment is the lack of investment in educators' ability to retire at a respectable age. Educators often have concerns about insufficient retirement benefits, particularly within the Kansas Public Employees Retirement System (KPERS). We must work to reform the KPERS system to make retirement benefits more competitive and attractive, which would make the profession more appealing to long-term candidates. While HB#2086 is not a complete solution, it is a great start, and I urge your support. Thank you!