



Chairperson Williams and K-12 Committee,

Thank you for allowing me to share my thoughts on HB2612. Hopefully, my perspective on this bill and the potential implications of the bill is valuable.

I advocate to continue granting the State Board of Education the authority to carry out their designated responsibilities. School accreditation extends beyond mere numerical figures or disputes over budget allocation or reporting methods. Schools are obligated to adhere to state laws and regulations set by the State Board of Education. In instances where schools fail to demonstrate progress or meet expectations, districts are given the chance to review the process, with guidance and support from the Kansas State Department of Education (KSDE). The accreditation process significantly impacts every student in a school district and should not be employed as a punitive measure based solely on a particular interpretation of a law. It is essential to entrust accreditation to the department equipped with the necessary staff, skills, comprehension, and experience in collaborating with schools and districts, along with the resources to support all educational institutions.

An additional issue with the proposed legislation is that KSDE is required to conduct a state audit to restore the district to accredited status. In my experience, every auditor I've encountered focuses solely on numbers without considering the reasons behind any changes in those numbers. Given the auditors' existing heavy caseload, imposing additional responsibilities will likely compromise the thoroughness and accuracy of their work.

A pertinent question arises regarding why the legislature has seemingly violated the law for many years by not fully funding special education. Understanding the historical context of the Kansas budget, it took multiple lawsuits before the legislature fully funded general education, possibly due to discrepancies in interpreting what constitutes full funding. It is imperative not to entangle schools in the complexities of legal interpretation, diverting them from their primary mission of educating students.

In conclusion, schools operate under the jurisdiction of the State School Board and locally elected boards of education. It is essential to empower our local boards to oversee educators and their daily activities. If any intentional violations of the law occur, we trust that our local boards are well-equipped to address and manage such issues.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Greg Lehr', is placed on a light gray rectangular background.

Greg Lehr
USD 262 Superintendent

