



Kansas City, Kansas Public Schools

Unified School District No. 500

Senate Standing Committee on Education Testimony on Senate Bill 450 March 7, 2012

**Dr. Cynthia Lane, Superintendent
Kansas City, Kansas Public Schools**

The last several years have been incredibly difficult ones for students and staff in the Kansas City, Kansas Public Schools. Years of budget cutting have left an indelible mark, but through it all, we have continued to labor to do what is right for all children. It is in this context that I want to express my sincere gratitude for the courage that the leadership of both parties on this committee has demonstrated, in their willingness to work together to craft a plan that provides additional funding for schools. In particular, I and the students whom I represent are grateful that you have rejected those voices that have pressed for a school finance plan that would move away from equality of opportunity for all students.

But I also want to make sure you understand that your work is not done. Yes, I appreciate that Senate Bill 450 provides for two years of desperately needed increases in Base State Aid Per Pupil. By putting these increases into the current formula, you are both recognizing the need that districts across the state have for additional funding, and endorsing the notion that education funding should continue to be directly tied to what it actually costs to educate students. Still, I am certain that not one of you went through the personal sacrifice of running for and holding elected office, in order to do half of a job. And so I need to remind you that, if you are serious about continuing to move school funding toward a system that provides opportunity for ALL Kansas students, there is still more work to do. The last several years have taught us that it is not enough to legislate equity in funding, if the will is not there to appropriate that funding. And when that failure to appropriate funding disproportionately hurts those students with the least advantage, it creates a system of haves and have nots, which goes against everything that I understand our nation to believe.

So, there is still work to do. Specifically, if this bill is to provide the opportunity for certain property-rich districts to exercise additional Local Option Budget (LOB) authority, that authority **MUST** be equalized, so that the playing field will be relatively level for all students across the state. And unlike our current situation, where the state has failed to appropriate sufficient resources to equalize the LOB for districts like mine, **additional LOB authority MUST be tied to the appropriation of sufficient funds to equalize both existing LOB authority, as well as the additional LOB authority granted by this bill.**

Such a bill would speak to the interests of property-rich districts that have been clamoring for additional resources for their students, without disproportionately punishing districts like KCK and others with low property wealth. It would help to ensure that adjoining districts with significant disparities in property wealth would still be able to engage in healthy competition for the best teachers, administrators and other staff, so that ALL students, across the state of Kansas, would have the opportunity to pursue their dreams. I strongly urge this committee to amend this bill, and tie additional LOB authority to the appropriation of sufficient funds to meet the statutory requirements, so that we will be able to tell our children that in Kansas, “all” truly does mean “all”!