



## Schools for Quality Education

007 Bluemont Hall, 1100 Mid-Campus Drive, Manhattan, KS 66506 • (785) 532-5886 • www.coe.ksu.edu/sqe

Testimony before the  
**Senate Education Committee**

on

**Senate Bill 450**

submitted by

**Mike McClellan, President BOE USD #269, Damar - Palco - Zurich  
Schools for Quality Education**

Madame Chairperson and members of the Senate Education Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today as a representative of a small rural school to offer testimony on Senate Bill 450, a bi-partisan effort to restore funding to PreK-12 education. I am also privileged to speak on behalf of Schools for Quality Education, an organization comprised of over 100 small rural school districts in Kansas.

Schools for Quality Education (SQE) has adopted the following policy statement in regards to **Funding Public Education**:

*"SQE supports adequately funding the current school finance formula as defined in statute and outlined in the state constitution as the best way to equitably finance our student's education."*

Schools for Quality Education supports Senate Bill 450, as it will any legislation that begins the long awaited restoration of the budget cuts our members have struggled to live with during the past three years. Importantly, we note that this proposal does not disturb the present weighting factors, such as low enrollment, at-risk and ELL, that are critical to provide high quality education to our students, regardless of their geographical location or zip code in Kansas.

Senate Bill 450 targets the base state aid per pupil and increases it to \$3,854 in school year 2012-2013 and to \$3,928 in school year 2013-1014. We feel that this provision demonstrates Kansas' resolve and sends a strong signal of its commitment to fund quality education for our children.

Senate bill 450 also increases the allowed LOB to 33% for school year 2012-2014 and to 35% for school year 2014-2015 and succeeding years. While we agree that districts

**"Rural is Quality"**

*Dea Ed*

*3-17-12  
Attch. # 3-1*

that want to spend more for their children should be able to do so, we strongly believe that it is critical that the LOB be equalized to prevent further disequalization. Without equalization of the LOB it becomes impossible for our poorer low valuation districts to raise their LOB. The LOB must be truly equalized.

We also support the removal of the mandatory vote requirement to access an LOB above 30 percent. The protest petition allowed in current law is retained for LOB increases that are above the statewide average.

The effect of the past budget cuts caused our district to eliminate a full-time arts teacher, an at-risk aide, a 1/2 time Career/Tech teacher, a 1/2 time Physical Education teacher and to employ a counselor at .6 equivalent of a position. The economic impact of eliminating these positions pales in comparison to the quality of education we seek to provide our students. As funding increases, Palco USD #269 hopes to employ an MTSS teacher/coordinator/coach and then also to retain a full-time career and technical education teacher. Palco students demonstrate significant at-risk behaviors and a full-time MTSS coordinator will help teachers provide "best practice" strategies for teachers and help us to monitor student progress. As Kansas pushes to be a leader in the career readiness arena, being able to add another CTE teacher will allow our district to offer more relevant pathways to the students we strive to serve. We note and applaud the fact that this committee has already sent legislation, Substitute for Senate Bill 393, to the House to implement Governor Brownback's important career technical education initiative while taking into account the concerns of small rural districts, such as removing the restrictive 30 mile limitation on secondary career technical education programs and retaining the current vocational education weighting in the school finance formula. The funding that you provide with Senate Bill 450 will allow us to be a better partner as we work together to provide a quality education for all of our students.

We note that other Senate committees have recommended a return to funding important initiatives, such as: teacher mentoring, parents as teachers, professional development and Pre-K. All of these initiatives will help us to provide a quality education for our students.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to speak to you and we wish you well in your deliberations.