



16740 W 175<sup>th</sup> Street

Olathe, KS 66062

**To: House K-12 Budget Committee;**

**Rep. Larry Campbell, Chair**

**From: Cassandra Barton; Insight School & Kansas Virtual Academy**

**Date: February 15, 2017**

**Re: Opposition to HB 2270**

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee,

I am Cassandra Barton, Head of School of Insight School of Kansas and Kansas Virtual Academy. These are two virtual schools within Spring Hill School District and are managed by K12, Inc, a virtual education provider.

K12 Inc. is a company that provides online school services and curriculum to school districts across the nation. Our products and services are designed to provide alternative opportunities for public school students from kindergarten to 12th grade. At Insight and KSVA, this includes:

- Providing a full range of services and supports for our students
- Utilizing the rigorous, interactive, research-based and standards-aligned K12 Curriculum
- Hiring and training KS certified teachers and staff to instruct and support our students in a virtual environment
- Providing the technology to allow our students and staff to interact in many live sessions

We do applaud the committee for taking the time to examine numerous finance proposal ideas, including this one. This is the key part of the process. However, we would be remiss if we did not offer comments on the implications this specific proposal places on virtual education.

Our opposition to this plan rests solely on the proposed funding levels for virtual education. For the 2016-2017 school year, full time virtual education students are funded with a flat cost of \$5,000 per pupil. This is actually a reduction from the current law prescribed in the second year of the Block Grant, which was intended to be \$5,600 per full time virtual education pupil. This reduction came during the 2016 Special Session.

HB 2270 would set full time virtual education funding per pupil to be equivalent to the general base-state-aid-per-pupil. The bill includes a schedule for the base-state-aid-per-pupil as follows: \$4,253 for school year 2017-2018, \$4,467 for school year 2018-2019, \$4,681 for school year 2019-2020 and \$4,895 for school year 2020-2021. Therefore, this would be a 15% cut per full time virtual education pupil. Even the goal of the stair-step increase over the next four years would never restore fully the intended \$5,600 (or the current \$5,000) funding level to full time virtual education students.

When this committee eventually works a school finance bill, or assembles several pieces of them together, we ask the committee to follow the recommendations of the 2015 Legislative Post Audit report on virtual education. This report illustrated the funding for full time virtual education students was not high enough prior to 2015.

Understanding this, the 2015 Legislature immediately approved increasing virtual education funding in the Block Grant.

There are dozens of different virtual schools and programs across the state. This is a good thing as we believe in local control. Different school districts have different needs and that correlates with virtual education. In the case of Spring Hill School District, a 15% cut, or even more as seen in other proposals introduced in the House, would result in reduced services the school can offer its virtual students. For example, we would expect cuts could need to occur in many areas of our schools. We would have to examine reductions and/or eliminations in the following areas:

- Teacher technology
- Professional development
- Face-to-face offerings for field trips and social outings
- Face-to-face testing venues
- Elementary elective courses and teachers
- Middle and high school elective options
- Family Academic Support Team
- Academic advising team
- Elementary math and reading specialists
- Overall teaching staff

If the committee wants to use a base-state-aid-per-pupil system for virtual education funding, we would recommend the implementation of a virtual education weighing to cover the difference between base-state-aid-per-pupil to \$5,600, as intended in the Block Grant.

We want to serve as a resource to the committee for any questions you may have regarding virtual education.

Respectfully,

Cassandra Barton