

Testimony to the  
House Committee on K-12 Education Budget Committee  
House Bill No. 2270  
February 15, 2017

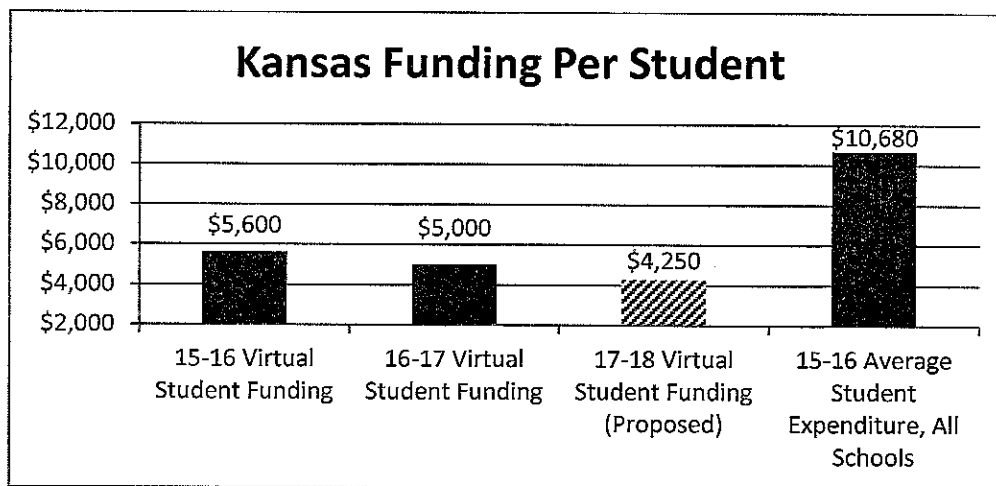
Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, good afternoon. My name is Zeke Rash, the School Leader of Kansas Connections Academy (KCA), a virtual school in partnership with USD 218 Elkhart.

KCA is a statewide virtual public school that currently serves 550 students. Many of these students have unique educational needs, which is why their families chose an online environment.

Virtual school students, although only 1% of the total Kansas student population, may be academically well ahead or behind grade level or require flexibility for medical issues, work, or family. Many are rural and through KCA have access to courses they otherwise would not. Some were bullied or otherwise found traditional brick and mortar schools to not be the best fit. Approximately 14% of KCA students have an IEP or 504 plan.

To meet these challenges, KCA expends most of its state funding for staff, curriculum, and school services. The 2015 Legislative Division of Post Audit report on virtual schools found that staff was the greatest cost (50%) and that 86% of full-time virtual school costs could be attributed to staff and curriculum.<sup>1</sup> When virtual school funding is cut, these are the areas most likely to suffer.

Full-time virtual schools do not receive weighted state funding, so any legislation to fund virtual schools at base-only rates will be the full amount that virtual schools receive. House Bill 2270 would represent a reduction of about \$750 per student, or 15%. This would be on top of last session's reductions, for a total reduction of 24% per student since the 2015-16 school year.



The Legislative Division of Post Audit concluded "Full-time K-12 virtual schools received about \$400 to \$1,500 per FTE student less in state funding than our estimated operating costs in 2013-14 [...] However, our estimated costs of \$4,500 to \$5,600 per FTE to operate schools in this model means funding was up to 36% less than what we estimated it cost to operate them."<sup>2</sup>

Thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony and it would be my pleasure to answer any questions.

<sup>1</sup> See page 17 at <<http://www.kslpa.org/assets/files/reports/R-15-001.pdf>>

<sup>2</sup> See page 19 at <<http://www.kslpa.org/assets/files/reports/R-15-001.pdf>>