

Testimony before the
Senate Committee on Financial Institutions and Insurance
In support of
SB 138
Submitted by Jim Porter, Chair
Kansas State Board of Education

Tuesday, March 14, 2017

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of SB 138. I also want to thank whoever is responsible for this bill for solving a number of issues. The supply of available teachers, including those in the pipeline to become teachers, does not meet the current demand. Furthermore, current legislation does not allow for retired individuals who may be willing and able to do so to fill those positions for more than a short period of time.

The State Board of Education is working on a number of initiatives to address the long-term solution to the current imbalance in supply and demand. This bill is not a long-term solution for either the imbalance or the solvency of KPERS, but it helps with one without damaging the other.

Under current statute, the State Board of Education identifies up to five areas of critical shortage as provided by law, in addition to Special Education, which is an ongoing critical area.

However, if you are in an isolated area of our state and need a vocational agriculture teacher (a position not on the list) and do not have a single applicant, you have a critical shortage. If you have a retired teacher who is willing to fill that position you can continue to provide that service to students if SB 138 is enacted.

One of the benefits of serving on the State Board of Education is that we get to visit

school districts in our State Board district. Last week I visited a school that was unable to find a counselor (a position also not on the list). They were able to find a retired administrator with a license in counseling to fill that position, but without a change in the statute that person will not be able to continue after this school year, although he is willing to do so. The district is actively seeking a counselor but has not been able to find anyone willing to take that position. With the increasing number of students with mental health needs the necessity of counseling services is increasing at an alarming rate. When I started my career in education many years ago we worried about students chewing gum. Now we need to address serious mental health issues of an extremely serious nature. The students in the aforementioned district need a counselor and this bill will allow the current one to continue, in the likely event that another acceptable candidate is not available.

The current law is complicated with numerous categories with different rates. This one is simple. There is one rate and it is determined by the KPERS Board. It does not cost the State anything and provides a short-term solution for some of the imbalance issues without damaging the solvency of KPERS.

This is not a long-term solution for either the teacher supply and demand imbalance or the solvency of KPERS, but it does provide for the opportunity to help school districts provide valuable educational services to their students while the State Board of Education addresses the imbalance and the Legislature addresses solvency.

Again, I thank you for the opportunity to address you this morning and will stand for questions at the appropriate time, however, the State Board of Education convenes at 10:00 this morning and as Chair it would probably be a good idea for me to be there.