



KANSAS NATIONAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION / 715 SW 10TH AVENUE / TOPEKA, KANSAS 66612-1686

Mark Desetti, Testimony
House Bill 2233
House Education Committee
February 18, 2019

Mister Chairman, members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you on House Bill 2233.

We would like to file this bill under the category of best intentions. Unfortunately, we believe the idea behind this bill needs to be explored more deliberately.

We know that classroom teachers spend a significant amount of their personal money in the purchase of classroom supplies that help them meet the needs of their students and to provide the best possible learning experience.

During my time in the classroom I purchased sets of novels for my students to read and books for my classroom library. I purchased groceries for cooking projects and materials for creative projects that expanded student learning. You can't imagine what I spent on quilting materials one year.

Teachers buy paper, bulletin board decorations (borders, letters, sentence strips, and more), manipulatives for math lessons, science experiment materials (everything from seeds to flowers to chemicals). The list is as endless as the imagination and creativity of the teacher and the needs of students. Teachers also buy materials for students whose families try but cannot provide those items on the school supply lists – crayons or pencils, tissues, and more.

So, a bill that would provide help so that teachers don't have to spend so much out of their own paychecks to support their lessons would naturally be appreciated.

But there is much to consider in this bill; many questions that arise and are not answered.

The definition of "classroom supplies" is written in such a way as to exclude what are often the most expensive – and to the teacher perhaps most important – supplies that are not covered by the school's supply budget or the supply lists that parents fill.

My class sets or small group sets of novels could be used in multiple years and would be disallowed under this bill. Materials for cooking projects – even though used in one year – would be disallowed. Even those bulletin board decorations would likely be disallowed since when I change the board, I can save the letters or borders and reuse them the next year.

It would appear to generally allow expenditures only on consumable non-food items such as appear on the school supply lists – pens, pencils, crayons, tissues, etc. It is as if it were written for the days of ditto masters and worksheets – days that are now history. The bill provides little support for the innovative and creative teacher.

Further, we are concerned about placing such a mandate on the schools without funding to meet that mandate. Schools can certainly do this now if they choose to put money into an account for this purpose and this bill does not provide any additional funding.

Our ask of the legislature is that you focus your attention on addressing the Gannon school finance decision. You are one step away from ending this litigation and ensuring that our schools can open and effectively serve all Kansas students. Once that task is finished, we hope you can look for effective means to ensure that teachers have both the funding and supplies to innovate, to be creative, and to take their lessons into the creative learning stratosphere.

We believe that this bill needs a major overhaul before it is ready for your full consideration.

Your first priority should be to secure the solution to the Gannon decision, and then take the time to ask teachers what it is they need to be the best they can and how you can support them.