

Testimony In Support of SB 271

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Thank You Chair, Baumgardner and members of the Education Committee for the opportunity to speak in support of SB 271. I represent Schools For Fair Funding the coalition of school districts who filed the Gannon lawsuit in 2011. Since last summer's Supreme Court decision SFFF has redirected its mission toward a monitoring activity to help provide input to state officials on issues that might affect the constitutionality of the current finance formula.

Although we testified in opposition to last year's bill, we respect the Supreme Court's decision and want to see an end to this litigation. We commend the leadership role that many members of this committee played last year in putting together a bipartisan coalition in getting SB 16 passed and signed into law by the Governor. Certainly the Governor must be commended as well.

We believe with the Passage of the five year plan in 2018 and the additional of \$90M dollars in 2019 for inflation, USD's can expect and plan for an infusion of slightly more than \$600M new dollars by the end of FY 2022. This is good news for Kansas students and their families.

Full funding of the five year plan and the inflation amount is dependent upon a continued commitment from the Governor and the Legislature to fund the final three years of the plan. We express our thank you to Governor Kelly for including the dollars necessary to fully funding the high density at risk weighting in her FY 2021 budget

Passage of SB 271 is critical to the effort to continued full funding for at risk funding and the five year plan. SB 271 removes the sunset placed on high density at risk funding that was placed into the statute in 2018. I believe the intent in 2018 was to tie the sunset provision to the Legislative Post Audit Study of at risk funds which was completed in December of 2019. This also allows the Legislature to evaluate the success of the additional amendment to high density at risk which was added in 2018 allowing high density schools within districts that do not meet the districtwide threshold to qualify for funding. We believe the change in 2018 was a positive one and warrants continuation. The High Density at risk weighting accounts for slightly more than \$52- to \$54M annually depending upon actual enrollment statewide. There are a few dozen districts that qualify from all parts of the state. USD 259 Wichita and USD 500 Kansas City receive roughly 20% of the total amount. Certainly the loss of high density dollars would have a devastating effect on both of these districts and many others in their efforts to improve student achievement.

To put the issue in another perspective loss of \$50M in high density at risk dollars in the last three years of the five years would represent nearly 20% over the entire amount of money the state assured to the Supreme Court it would allocate to make the school financed system constitutional in Kansas.

We urge this committee to repeal the sunset provision for high density at risk and approve SB 271.