HB 2690 Proponent Testimony – written-only
House K-12 Budget Committee
James Franko, president
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Madam Chair and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written-only, proponent testimony on HB 2690.

Teacher pay is an omnipresent issue. Most people believe, as we do, that teachers – as a GROUP – are not sufficiently compensated. Teacher salaries are determined by a one-size-fits-all approach dictated by a matrix system rooted in two input variables: years of experience and the teacher's education level. That matrix system is preferred by some, but it is not in the best interests of individual teachers or, most importantly, the students they serve.

Just as in any other profession, not all teachers perform at the same level, but teachers get paid the same amount irrespective of "performance," however defined. Simply put, the amount of money a teacher is paid has nothing to do with his or her effectiveness in reaching and educating individual students. That runs counter to the basic human tenant of being incentivized for demonstrating better performance.

From this stasis, one could argue the reason student achievement in Kansas is unacceptably low and stagnant – with large income-based achievement gaps – is a one-sized-fits-all approach found across the public education regime. From the teacher pay matrix to the zero-choice structure of public schools.

We support the concept that a bonus pay system for Kansas teachers is not only appropriate, but long overdue.

There is scholarly research that merit pay for teachers works, both for the teachers and students. In a recent meta-analysis of over 40 merit pay studies, the authors (including one from Kansas State University) found "a **positive** and **significant** relationship of performance pay on student learning outcomes."[1] (*emphasis not added*). Included in their findings are these two important variables in a merit pay approach:

- Individualized incentives are more effective than group incentives and,
- Larger incentives work better than small ones.

Both are what one would expect, but it provides empirical evidence of a better approach than the matrix system. It also indicates that student achievement increases <u>after</u> performance pay is rewarded, so merit pay for teachers has a lingering effect on student success.

ThoughtCo., a web-based education organization, crystalized the theoretical justification for a merit pay system with six conceptual bullet points:[2]
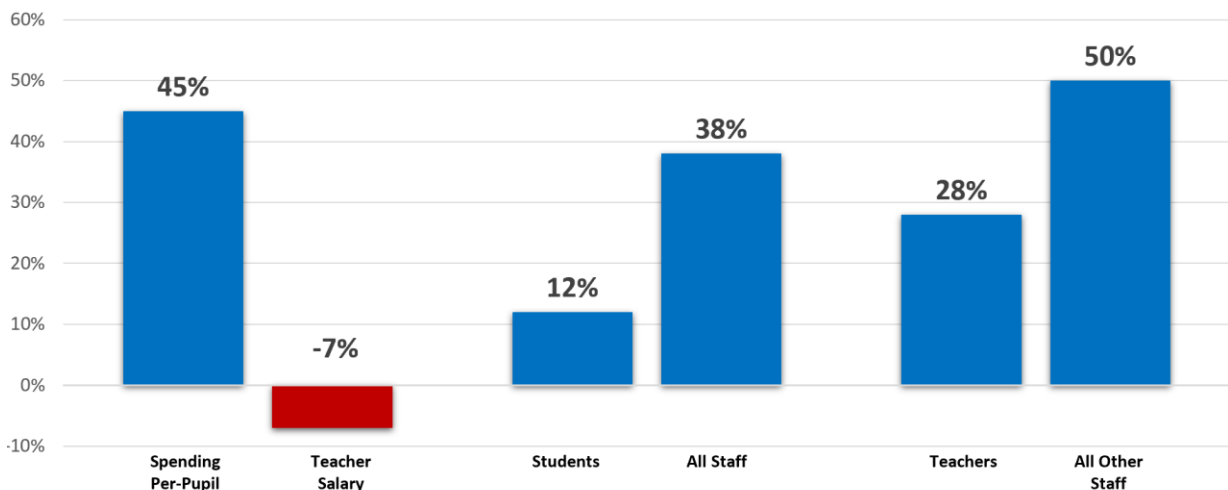
- Americans value hard work and results, and our capitalist system hinges upon rewarding such results.

- Incentivized teachers will work harder and produce better results.

- Merit Pay programs will help recruit and retain the nation's brightest minds.

- Teachers are already underpaid. Merit Pay would help address this injustice.

- We are in the middle of a teaching shortage. Merit pay would inspire potential teachers to give the profession more consideration as a viable career choice, rather than a personal sacrifice for the higher good.

- With American schools in crisis, shouldn't we be open to trying almost anything new in the hopes of making a change? If the old ways of running schools and motivating teachers aren't working, perhaps it's time to think outside of the box and try Merit Pay.

Perhaps the last point they make is the most apropos given the current state of student success. The Legislature has increased money to the schools so that total per-pupil spending is now over $16,000 per year. This funding growth is faster than inflation and, when paired with the hiring practices of local districts, seen in the chart below, there is a demand for legislative intervention to put the focus on increasing student achievement.[3] Since this vast increase has not had any impact on student achievement, why not "think outside the box" and give high performing teachers more money?

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of HB 2690.

Changes in Inflation-Adjusted Spending, Teacher Salaries and Staff FY 1992 to FY 2015, Kansas Public Schools

Spending Per-Pupil	Teacher Salary	Students	All Staff	Teachers	All Other Staff
45%	-7%	12%	38%	28%	50%

Source: EdChoice, "Back to the Staffing Source" by Dr. Benjamin Scafidi.

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[1] http://www.nctq.org/blog/Performance-pay-programs-that-pay-off
[2] https://www.thoughtco.com/pros-and-cons-of-merit-pay-2081479
[3] http://www.edchoice.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/Back-to-the-Staffing-Surge-by-Ben-Scafidi.pdf

Wichita Office: 250 N. Water St., Suite 216 | Wichita, KS 67202 | 316.634.0218
Overland Park Office: 12980 Metcalf Ave., Suite 430 | Overland Park, KS 66213 | 913.213.5038

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