



February 6, 2019

Senate Select Committee on Education Finance

Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 44.

Chairwoman Baumgardner and Members of the Committee:

I am pleased to submit this testimony in support of Senate Bill 44. The Shawnee Mission School district believes that the specific funding and policy components included in Senate Bill 44 will address the issues raised in the most recent Gannon decision. The Legislature has worked diligently over the past decade to secure adequate funding for public schools. Lawmakers have crafted a revised funding formula, and secured sufficient revenue to address the issue of funding equity. The remaining challenge is to meet the constitutional requirement for adequacy.

Our legislative platform, attached, reflects the school finance policy priorities of our Board and our District. In the Shawnee Mission School District, we have invested the most recent restoration of funding to nearly constitutional levels in 2010. The base funding increases approved during the last two legislative sessions have helped us begin to improve outcomes, increase teacher/student support, and provide better pay for teachers. Our Board, our teachers, and our parents continue to push for additional counselors, nurses, and social workers, in order to address the behavioral health issues of our students. In our district, the additional funding for inflation provided for in SB 44 will address these challenges, and provide resources to continue our academic improvement.

Shawnee Mission School District supports the current Kansas Constitution and the additional resource the Kansas Supreme Court has identified as necessary. The Johnson County public schools collectively have endorsed joint legislative priorities that include support for the Kansas Constitution, behavioral health funding for all school districts, funding for inflation as the Court has approved, and an elimination of the bond cap. The joint legislative priorities are attached.



SHAWNEE MISSION

SCHOOL DISTRICT

We appreciate the difficult decisions you are required to make this session. After the work and resources invested in the last few years, resolution of the issue of adequacy is at hand. We support the solution provided in Senate Bill 44 and encourage your support.

If I can provide any additional information or answer questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Rick Atha, Ph.D.
Associate Superintendent of Organizational Support

Direct line: 913-993-6403
E-mail: rickatha@smsd.org