



House Education Committee  
Honorable Chair, Rep. Adam Thomas  
February 20, 2023

Oral testimony **in favor** of House Bill 2223  
Repealing the existing sunset on high-density at-risk weighting  
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Honorable Chair Thomas and Committee Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony in favor of House Bill 2223. The proposed bill repeals the existing sunset on high-density at-risk weighting provision. The June 30, 2024, expiration of this provision will reduce funding to qualifying districts by about \$71 million. For Kansas City, Kansas Public School (KCKPS/USD500), this means a funding reduction of \$7.5 million. KCKPS is the largest school district in Wyandotte County and the fifth largest school district in Kansas, with just over 20,000 students enrolled. 81% of our student population meets one or more criteria to be defined as at-risk. 57% of our students have a home language other than English. 39% are English language learners (ELL). 14% of our students are in special education settings. USD 500 is committed to meeting the needs of a richly diverse community. Still, this complex context presents our district with a significant challenge in providing at-risk programs and opportunities at scale. KCKPS uses its high-density at-risk funding to assist with the high costs of these services. The anticipated sunset of those funds would be profoundly detrimental to our charge to serve all our students.

The use of at-risk student funds is targeted and accounts for the varying costs of educating students facing multiple challenges. KCKPS is committed to the at-risk best practices developed by the State Board of Education and endeavors to continue to provide evidence-based services to at-risk students. Below are a few of the at-risk programs and opportunities provided at KCKPS/USD500:

- Strategic plan for targeting teachers in critical areas
- Conscious Discipline Training
- PACES school-based crisis services
- Parent involvement
- Fairfax Learning Center transportation
- McKinney-Vento transportation
- Family and Community Engagement Specialists
- In-School Suspension/Recovery Room Monitors
- Kidzone Extended Day Specialists
- Social Workers
- Instructional Aides
- Instructional Coaches

USD 500's persistent focus, strategic planning, and targeted use of at-risk funding result in broader improvements across our school campuses. In the 2019-20 school year, 34 of 48 schools were identified as KSDE Targeted Support Improvement (TSI) and Comprehensive Support Improvement (CSI) schools. This number decreased to 20 of 49 schools in January 2023. Of the 20 remaining on the list, eight schools moved to less intensive identifications due to improved data.

Critical work occurring in KCKPS over the last three years, which has been supported through at-risk funding, aligns with the KESA accreditation cycle and continues to create focus and alignment of KCKPS frameworks. As a result of this persistent focus, several notable recognitions have occurred, as evidenced by favorable district and school data shifts.

First, KSDE honored 7 KCKPS schools (Sumner Academy of Arts & Sciences, Emerson Elementary School, Bertram Caruthers Elementary School, John Fiske Elementary School, Mark Twain Elementary School, Thomas A. Edison Elementary School, Arrowhead Middle School) to receive *The Challenge Award* in 20-21. These seven schools were part of 100 schools in the state selected to receive this award for outstanding achievement on the 20-21 math and reading assessment results.

Next, New Stanley Elementary School (in 19-20) and Bertram Caruthers Elementary School (in 20-21) were recognized nationally by the National Association of ESEA State Program Administrators (NAESPA) to represent Kansas for closing achievement gaps between student groups for two or more consecutive years on the Kansas Assessment Program.

Finally, KCKPS received the Copper Award for Social Emotional Learning (SEL) in the Kansans Can Star Recognition Program for 2022. In 20-21, KCKPS earned the *Star Recognition Awards Program* honor and was also recognized with the *Commissioner's Award with Honors* for exceptional work to implement systems that lead to positive academic outcomes. This recognition stemmed from the district's postsecondary progress report, where KCKPS has continued to perform above the state's predicted effectiveness rate range of 21-28% for the past several data cycles. Even as we continue to work toward further improvement, we celebrate that KCKPS is currently at 31%.

KCKPS takes seriously the fiduciary responsibility to manage high-density at-risk funding made possible by the State of Kansas taxpayers. To this end, it ensures the funds are separate from general classroom spending.

KCKPS favors House Bill 2223, so we can continue progressing in academic achievement and post-secondary success.

Thank you for your time and consideration.