

Testimony on **SB 623**  
before the  
**Senate Committee on Education**

by

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Madam Chair and Members of the Committee;

Thank you for the opportunity to appear today as a proponent of **SB 623**, but with an important qualification. We support the concept of a “linear transition” for the high density at-risk weighting because we believe districts experiencing a loss in budget authority should have that loss phased-out or cushioned by some mechanism. Requiring a district to lose all of its high density weighting as a result of a small change in the enrollment of students eligible for at-risk funding would require a significant reduction in services for at-risk children.

However, we oppose the provision in this bill that, in effect, funds the linear transition by reducing aid to the districts with the highest percentage of low income children. The school finance resolution adopted this year by our members expressly supports additional at-risk funding. We have taken that position based on the clear evidence that increased at-risk funding has dramatically increased achievement for all students.

Over the past decade, the biggest change in the school finance formula has been the increase in funding targeted at students who are “at-risk” of failure in school. Funding for at-risk, bilingual and special education programs has tripled, and have increased from less than 10 percent of district general fund budgets to over 20 percent. As funding has increased, achievement on state assessments has increased significantly for at-risk students – and for other students as well.

The same is true on the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP). Scores of all Kansas students improved both compared to previous years and other states. For each subgroup, Kansas scores improved significantly, and the national ranking among low income students held steady, increased for African Americans and declined only for Hispanics.

Increasing student achievement, especially for at-risk students who have tended to have low educational attainment, is critical to both individual and societal economic success. The difference between success and failure in school has major consequences on an individual's future earnings. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the average high school drop-out will earn \$1 million over their working life in 1999 dollars, while a high school graduate will earn \$1.2 million; working with a two-year degree \$1.6 million; a bachelor's degree \$2.1 million; and advanced degree results in earnings of \$2.5 to \$4.4 million. Therefore, every dollar we invest in a student's educational success is truly an investment in future earnings, future tax revenues, higher productivity and reduced social welfare costs.

Therefore, KASB opposes the idea that we should reduce at-risk funding for some districts to help others. Funding a linear transition makes sense for the formula, but increasing funding for programs that help students succeed in school makes sense for the future of Kansas.

Thank you for your consideration.