

SB 428 Proponent Testimony – in person

Senate Education Committee

Robert Merritt

March 13, 2024

Madam Chairperson and Members of the Committee,

I appreciate this opportunity to provide testimony in support of SB 428, as these issues are near to my heart as a former secondary teacher and a two-term board member for USD 265 in Goddard.

Upon review of **SB 428** I find relevance in several of these proposed revisions:

- Stipulates that the building needs assessment process must include input from teachers, principals, and board members.

Testimony: Board members should be involved early and often and hear directly from teachers about barriers kids face so they can make informed decisions on budget changes.

Board members approval (the official okiedokie) was all that we were briefed to give. I am an educator with job experience, 3 degrees and 42 years' experience in this space. I know the lingo and have been in IEP meetings etc. on both sides of the table. As a member of the educational community for my entire career I was stunned by the lack of training and explanation put into getting new boe members to an understanding of the issues. I don't mean to impugn this particular district but every boe member I talked with in other districts at meetings felt the same way. The legislature could encourage a nonpartisan statewide informational curriculum resource for BOE members and accomplish much of what this bill is trying to influence.

- SB 428 requires that board members be given achievement reports with percentages of students who are proficient and not proficient.

Testimony: The state assessment never guided what decisions we made on curriculum. We were told we were leading the charge and were ahead of other districts. Both sides need to be presented on this issue. The state assessment and ACT are being pitted

against one another and they show two entirely different scenarios. For example, State Assessment is given to every student and in Kansas only 73% take ACT. My experience informs me which one to look at for what issue I am concerned with. How does a patron that gets elected to a boe know that unless there is an unbiased formal learning curve for them? This should at minimum include a definition of Proficient and Non-Proficient and what grades are assessed. This bill or a subsequent bill should:

- include provisions for statewide nonlocal school training before and after boe members are sworn in.
- This training should be available year-round for patrons considering running for BOE.
- The public should be able to go look at their boe members training progress.

➤ Fund transfers must be documented in the budget.

Testimony: Boe meetings were concise and if you wanted a better understanding, you were given the opportunity to meet with the finance person to get “down in the weeds”. Board members find the mountain of spread sheets and documentation mind-numbing. We required our finance manager to bring a one-page synopsis to boe meetings so we could know where our money was and what it was used for. If that person lost it on the way to the coliseum we would never know! Again, training for boe members to be informed of their new volunteer effort will pay off in transparency and better decisions.

Please support the important changes in SB 428.

Thank you.