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Testimony to the Special Education Taskforce Committee

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ORAL or WRITTEN ONLY TESTIMONY: written only testimony

Dear Chair and members of the taskforce,

I am writing you to urge you to work toward fully funding Special Education in Kansas.

I have two children, one who is nonverbal autistic who is not in a general education classroom most of the time, and a child who has needs that can be met in a general education setting/classroom. My child in a Special Education program has been in a special education setting since 2016, and so I have seen the devastating decline in Special Education since, but especially starting 2021 to now. Paraprofessionals and Special Education staff (teachers, SLP's, OT's, and other kinds of Special Education therapists and staff) have been detrimentally impacted. My son needs 1 to 1 para support, and this has been directed in his IEP for several years. The paraprofessional staff for his classroom (he is in an autism classroom most of the time) has been below what is needed for years. At times, HALF of the staff needed has not been filled. When districts are not being funded appropriately by the state, they must pull the funding from General Education funds, which would otherwise allow them to hire more people for these necessary positions. Pulling from General Education funds not only impacts Special Education, but ALL Kansas kids.

This has had a DIRECT impact on my son and our family. Without getting the needed support, my child has not progressed in his education as he should be, and his behaviors have increased significantly because he cannot get the support he needs. These situations cause problems not only for his classroom, but also for his working parents who constantly must show up to provide support that his educators are unable to provide simply due to lack of numbers.

Special Education has NOT been fully funded at the state mandated level of 92% of excess costs since 2011. I reached out to Rep Kristey Williams about this in a previous email last year, and she quoted that \$180 million was added in the past year. This is not true, as money was RESTORED that was cut in previous years. At the same time funding was restored (and wasn't kept up with inflation), the funding has not kept up with Special Education funding either. There have been MANY assessments of the Special Ed funding, and not once has the formula been called into question until now. Changing formulas seems like a very sneaky way to continue to underfund what is already EGREGIOUSLY underfunded.

The Special Education shortfall is projected to be \$226.5 MILLION by the 2024-2025 school year. Kansas has a \$2.6 BILLION surplus as of the end of the fiscal year. To continue to punish Kansas children by refusing to fund Special Education considering such a large surplus is wrong. My tax dollars should be going toward supporting Kansas, especially young Kansans, vulnerable Kansans, and it would behoove us all to make sure funding gets to where it is desperately needed.

Thank you for your consideration and I hope funding will be expediated for our schools.

Dawn Brumbley

Olathe District parent

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