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Special Education Task Force Testimony

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Written ONLY Testimony

Dear Special Education Task Force Members,

I am writing today to share testimony about the impact fully funding Special Education would have on every student, staff member, and district in the state of Kansas. As you are well aware, meeting the needs of our students on an IEP requires extra resources. Special Education in Kansas has not been fully funded since 2011 at the mandated level of 92%. The excess costs that districts must reallocate is projected to be \$226.5 million dollars by the 2024-2025 school year. This not only affects the nearly 90,000 students who have IEPs, but the 400,000+ public school students and 40,000+ educators in the state.

As a veteran teacher of over 20 years, I think of the many opportunities and resources that would be afforded to my students if special education was funded. My district, Buhler USD 313, spends \$1.6 million covering those excess costs. This money is pulled from our general fund which could be used for classroom materials, out of school learning opportunities and salary increases for all staff working in schools. My school has struggled the past 5 years to fill paraprofessional positions because of the inability to offer a competitive wage.

Our students who require Special Education Services are our most vulnerable learners. They require the most resources and deserve a guaranteed, quality public school experience. We saw an increase in our recent state assessment scores when we specifically allocated ESSR monies to remediation and learning gaps; the same should hold true for our students who are requiring special services to learn at their fullest potential. I urge you to do your duty to public schools and offer real solutions to this problem to help local students succeed.

Samantha Neill
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