

MINUTES OF THE SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Jean Schodorf at 1:35 p.m. on February 6, 2007, in Room 123-S of the Capitol.

Committee members absent:

Committee staff present: Sharon Wenger, Kansas Legislative Research Department
Michele Alishahi, Kansas Legislative Research Department
Ashley Holm, Kansas Legislative Research Department
Theresa Kiernan, Revisor of Statutes
Shirley Higgins, Committee Secretary

Conferees appearing before the committee: Andy Schlapp, Director of Governmental Relations for Sedgwick County
Mark Tallman, Kansas Association of School Boards
Jim Leiker, The Capper Foundation Easter Seals
Mark Desetti, Kansas National Education Association
Bill Reardon, Kansas City, Kansas Public Schools
Stuart Little, Shawnee Mission School District 512
Scott Frank, Legislative Division of Post Audit

Continued hearing on: **SB 138 – Autism Task Force**

Andy Schlapp, Director of Government Relations for Sedgwick County, testified in support of **SB 138**. He commented that the incidence of autism has increased from 1 in 10,000 births when his autistic son was born to 1 in 166 births today, but services have not kept pace with this increase. He noted that Sedgwick County wants to make sure that the issue of autism remains about direct services and not about who, what group, or what agency needs to be in charge. He recommended that more than one speech pathologist serve on the task force since autism is a communication disorder. (Attachment 1)

Mark Tallman, Kansas Association of School Boards (KASB), testified in support of **SB 138**. He explained that KASB has not adopted a position on the need for the creation of an autism task force; however, the Association is aware of the potential impact issues raised by the bill could have on school district programs such as special education. Therefore, KASB supports the provision in the bill that one of the 13 members of the task force be a local school board member. (Attachment 2)

As requested at the February 5 meeting when he testified in support of **SB 138**, Jim Leiker, Caper Foundation Easter Seals, distributed copies of an informational packet concerning questions relating to autism, autism spectrum disorder (ASD), and Easter Seals' relationship to autism. (Attachment 3) He also responded to questions from the Committee. With this, the hearing on **SB 138** was closed.

SB 93 – School districts; high density at-risk pupil weighting; linear transition calculation

Theresa Kiernan, Revisor of Statutes Office, distributed copies of a balloon of page 1 of **SB 93** which showed corrections needed on lines 30 and 31 concerning the calculation of high density at-risk pupil weighting. (Attachment 4) She explained that the bill changed the formula to a linear transition formula and went on to explain how the high density at-risk weighting is currently calculated. She explained that the last category for calculations is for districts that have at least 35.1 percent at-risk students and a geographical density of 212.1 pupils per square mile, which would get the same weighting that the districts with over 50 percent get. The bill would eliminate this category and set it so that it is linear. She noted that the At-Risk Council recommended the bill, and the 2010 Commission supported it.

Mark Tallman, Kansas Association of School Boards, testified in support of **SB 93**. He noted that the purpose of the bill was to ensure that small reductions in student enrollment do not result in major reductions in state funding. He further noted that KASB has a position that reductions in state aid should be softened by mechanisms that spread those changes over time, and the linear transition proposed in the bill would accomplish that purpose. (Attachment 5)

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Mark Desetti, Kansas National Education Association, testified in support of **SB 93**. He noted that KNEA supported the high density at-risk provisions enacted last year as an appropriate way to address issues of high levels of poverty and that the linear transition for funding proposed in **SB 93** was an appropriate way to address a flaw in the formula. (Attachment 6)

There being no others wishing to testify, the hearing on **SB 93** was closed.

SB 142 – School districts; cost of living weighting; comparative wage index

Theresa Kiernan, Revisor of Statutes Office, explained that **SB 142** would amend the provisions concerning the cost of living weighting. Currently, the State Board determines who qualifies for cost of living weighting based on the cost of housing within the district. The bill would change the basis for this determination by using the most recent comparable wage index prepared by the National Center for Educational Statistics. The bill maintains the requirement that the district have the 25 percent LOB in addition to falling within the formula. All local money is generated by local tax money. It is not equalized. The current limit for cost of living levy would be 5 percent in state financial aid in the district. The new limit would set a ceiling. The State Board would determine, under the formula, what the districts could generate by their levy. The districts could choose to levy up to that amount, but they would not be required to levy that amount.

Bill Reardon, Kansas City, Kansas Public Schools (USD 500), testified in support of **SB 142** with reservations. He said, in summary, USD 500 supports the new methodology in the bill, provided that far fewer dollars are made available and that these new taxpayer dollars be equalized with state dollars. (Attachment 7)

Stuart Little, testified in support of **SB 142** on behalf of Shawnee Mission School District 512. He noted that, while the current housing based formula is applicable to 17 districts, the new formula in the bill may make the cost of living available to over 100 districts and would not cost any state funding. He also pointed out that, since school districts spend 85 percent of their budgets on salary and benefit costs, this approach seems to be a better fit than housing costs. In conclusion, he noted that districts below the average comparable wage index are not reduced under the bill. (Attachment 8)

Mark Tallman, Kansas Association of School Boards, testified in opposition to **SB 142**. He explained that KASB opposed the bill because it creates a local levy to fund the cost of living adjustment without any state equalization aid. He noted that KASB policies oppose local enhancements to the state budget unless all districts can raise similar revenues with similar tax efforts. He went on to discuss a spreadsheet attached to his written testimony which estimated the amount of mill levy required to raise the revenues authorized by the bill for each school district. He also discussed a chart attached to his testimony which showed average teacher salaries for last year by enrollment groups. He commented that it seemed clear that the bill would potentially provide more resources in areas that currently have less difficulty attracting teachers and make it more difficult to attract teachers to the most isolated, rural parts of the state. In conclusion, he noted that KASB adopted a school finance resolution which indicated that the real problem with school finance is that the base budget per pupil remains far too low. He suggested that this problem is causing districts to continually seek other ways to meet educational costs. (Attachment 9)

Scott Frank, Legislative Division of Post Audit, briefed the Committee on the comparable wage index used to estimate regional differences in teacher salaries across the United States which was developed by the National Center for Education Statistics and released in May 2006. He defined “comparable wage index,” explained how the comparable wage index was developed, and explained how the comparable wage index can be used to compare teacher salaries in Kansas. (Attachment 10)

Due to time limitations, Senator Schodorf announced that the hearing on **SB 142** was continued to February 7, at which time Mr. Frank will complete his presentation and three other conferees will testify.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:30 p.m.

The next meeting is scheduled for February 7, 2007.

CONTINUATION SHEET

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