

To the meeting of the Task Force on Special Education and Related Services Funding,

I am very disappointed to hear that certain members of the state legislature such as Rep. Williams are still not committed to fulfilling the KS state mandate to fund 92% of excess district costs of Special Education and Related Services (SPED). The state legislature has still not met the statutory requirements of 92% since 2011, and changing the formula in order to meet the goal of 92% without actually significantly the dollar amount is just tomfoolery and we all know it. Every student is negatively impacted when SPED isn't properly funded, since, as the state legislature likes to IGNORE, funding special education is legally required and schools have to make up the shortfall with general funds.

While I don't have any children in the KS education system in the moment, I know many other families who have. They all have told me how much their children benefit from the individualized plans tailored to their specific needs. They *all* have also told me how much they have had to fight for their children to be recognized as needing extra or different help, to get those individualized plans, and how much of a detriment it is when those plans can't be met because there aren't enough paras, or teachers with the necessary background, etc. If you'd like a success story, my brother in law was one of those children. As a child diagnosed with autism / being on the spectrum, he was a SPED student in the KS school system. With his needs properly met (after all that struggle I mentioned above), he has now become an elementary teacher himself and teaches in rural KS, passing on the gift to the next generation. Please let us invest in our future, in all of our children.

As your constituent, please do not change the formula used. Again, when schools consistently tell you that they have to use their general funds to meet special education funding needs, changing the formula so that it all 92% fully funded on paper without actually giving the schools more money doesn't in any way actually contribute to the goal of hiring the staff needed to properly educate SPED students. Playing shell games should be reserved for scam artists and entertaining young children. It's been over a decade, just fund our special education students already so that everyone benefits from a decent education, including our non-SPED students.

Sincerely,  
Mischa Buckler-Mullins, Overland Park, KS 66212  
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