

Testimony to the Task Force on Special Education and Related Services Funding (Written only)

By Jacqueline Lightcap

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Dear Task Force Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony for your meeting this week. I'm Jacqueline Lightcap, member of the Auburn-Washburn USD 437 Board of Education in Topeka. I'm writing to you today as an individual, though all Board members share similar concerns about this topic.

At Auburn-Washburn, we are proud of the success and character of our students! Our 2023 graduating class boasted a 94.2% graduation rate, 98 Kansas Board of Regents' curriculum completers, 176 students with a 3.65 GPA or above, and 16 International Baccalaureate graduates. We invite you to visit us anytime.

We are grateful to the legislature for continuing to support general education fund allocations that allow us to meet the needs of our students each year. When special education is fully funded, we will be able to make sure those general fund dollars are available to better provide for the people and programs that are vital to our community.

In FY23, we transferred \$7,990,413 from our general budget to our special education fund in order to fully meet the needs of our students receiving special education services. These services are required by state and federal law, even when funding is lacking. When we use the general fund budget to supplant needed and required special education services, less dollars are available for personnel. Personnel is the largest budgeted line item so it is essential to protect the general fund budget for personnel. Specifically, there simply are not enough special education teachers, special education support providers (ex: speech language pathologists, physical therapists, adaptive PE teachers, psychologists, etc.), and paraeducators to fill vacant positions. General fund dollars must be available and used to recruit and retain caring and highly-skilled personnel to meet the needs of students.

Our staff are creative, resourceful professionals who give their all every day to ensure every student has the opportunity to reach their unique potential, no matter the level of funding received. Imagine the possibilities when special education is fully funded and general education dollars are able to serve their intended purpose.

Thank you for your time. Please contact me if I can be of further assistance.