



## Testimony to Support Fully Funding Special Education. Written Only.

1 message

Jessica Weiner <birdbean79@gmail.com>

Mon, Jan 1, 2024 at 2:44 PM

To: Matthew.Willis@klrd.ks.gov

Hello. My name is Jessica Weiner.

I am a concerned Kansas public school parent of a second grader in Lawrence KS, district USD 497.

Since my daughter entered kindergarten at Woodlawn Elementary in Lawrence a few years ago, our little family (I am an only parent of an only child) has been confronted with so much uncertainty.

Will our neighborhood school be here tomorrow? Each year that she has attended, it's been threatened with closure. Will the staff be granted the resources they need to provide my daughter and her friends with a comprehensive education in a moderately reasonable environment?

Throughput these last couple years, I have become involved with our district and state education mechanisms at a level higher than I could have ever anticipated.

Due to budget constraints, staff and services have continued to be stripped away. In the same year teachers were tasked with adjusting to a new, less costly and less favorable reading program, they were also tasked with teaching multiple grades, for the first time ever, again to save dollars.

While our state government does everything within it's power to ensure that those who opt out of mostly state-run education are awarded maximum returns, those that do not have the luxury of that option, and/or are true believers in the sanctity of public education are left with the fallout of a state that gives no credence to the worth of it's population and future generations.

I do NOT believe these actions speak for Kansas, for it's historical support of the greater good, yet no one can deny people are leaving this state at historical highs, opting out of raising families here, seeking greener pastures where their contributions to, not just the economy, but to the culture, climate and vitality of their chosen local is valued, recognized, and rewarded.

Kansas is giving us no incentive to stay. Public Education, is at the crux of the matter, a canary in coal mine that teaches us that this environment is inhospitable to family life.

The more than 20% shortfall in what Kansas is tasked with supplying to it's Special Education services, versus it's current spending, is a signifier that Kansas does not value it's children- does not value it's PEOPLE.

When Special Education is shortchanged, the people depending on those services are hurt, and so is every other student, staff *and* school family member, as funds are rearranged at the district level to accommodate those with the clearest need.

As I said; I never pictured myself as any kind of spokesperson for Public Education. As a struggling only parent with a child entering the public education system, I believed this was one domain inwhich we wouldn't need to struggle.

I grew up in Kansas, and my own experiences with Public Education led me to believe my child would have access to a topnotch Public School experience.

I believed this one aspect of our lives would *not* be a struggle.

The last few years have taught me that Kansas does *not* prioritize the education of it's people; does *not* view free and equal access to education as fundamental to it's democracy-

So, I have found myself, unwittingly an advocate, for something I believed was my child's birthright as a citizen of America and Kansas.

I have learned a lot about the ins and outs of how one goes about advocating for Public Education here in Kansas, but on this occasion I am certain I am not meeting all the technical criteria of written testimony.

My mother has recently been diagnosed with a very aggressive cancer, and my little family is my priority. I do not have the bandwidth to do more than write to you in whatever way I know how.

Please let it be known that *this* Kansan, Jessica Weiner, mother of Sylvie Weiner, says that not fully funding Special Education hurts all Kansans; public or *private* school kid; family, staff, or community member; business or individual.

I ask all our elected Public Servants to represent the Public they were elected to serve, and do everything in their power to

**Fully Fund Special Education.**

Jessica Weiner

(785)766-0186

[birdbean79@gmail.com](mailto:birdbean79@gmail.com)