

Testimony to the
Senate School Finance Committee
House Bill 2410

Zeke Rash,
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May 18, 2017

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee,

I am Zeke Rash, Principal of Kansas Connections Academy (KCA), a virtual school in partnership with USD 218 Elkhart. Thank you for allowing me to enter written testimony in support of the funding provisions for virtual education in HB 2410.

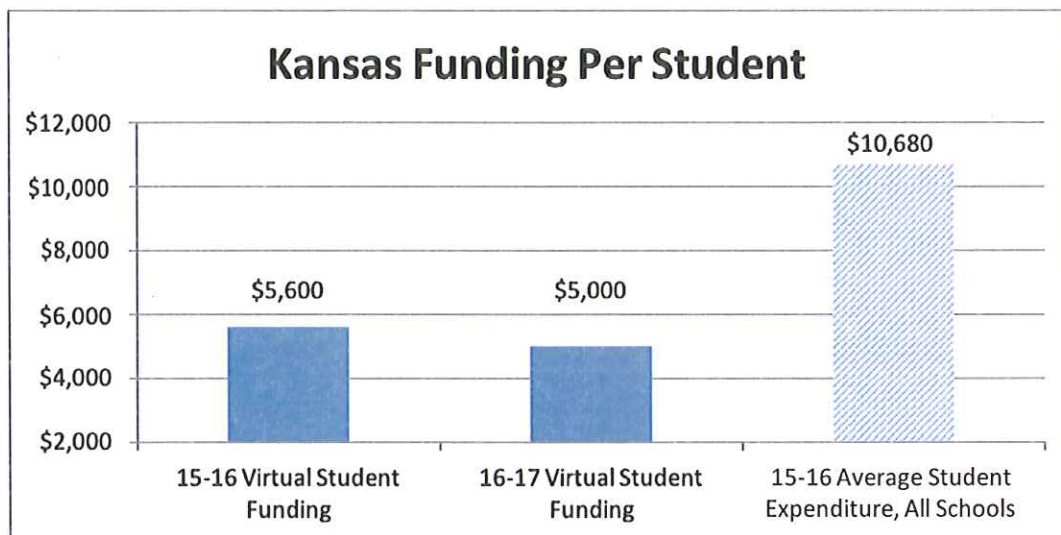
KCA is a statewide virtual public school that currently serves 550 students. Students come to us with unique and often challenging educational needs, which is why their families made a change to an online environment. Approximately 14% of KCA students are special education with an IEP or 504 plan and about half are at-risk.

Despite students' serious challenges, KCA had a 66.2% graduation rate in 2015-16. On standardized tests, KCA meets or exceeds state performance in reading and writing and slightly lags state averages in math.

KCA's funding is a flat \$5,000 per student. Virtual schools do not receive weighted funding. Furthermore, this is already a decrease from the 2015-16 level of \$5,600 per student (an 11% reduction) and less than half of what traditional schools receive to educate students.

Since funding is primarily used to provide the teaching staff, curriculum, and school services that our students require, these are the areas most likely to suffer from any further cuts.

HB 2410 keeps funding at the current levels and will also keep KCA's services for students at current levels.



Although this bill maintains the cuts of the 2016 Special Session, we believe HB 2410's funding level for virtual will allow KCA to continue to serve those Kansas students who need a different learning environment to meet their unique educational needs.

Thank you again for the opportunity to offer written testimony on this important issue.