



HB 2007 and the Impact on Johnson County School Districts

March 17, 2025

Submitted Jointly by: Dr. Tonya Merrigan, Blue Valley Schools

Dr. Brent Yeager, Olathe Public Schools

Dr. Michael Schumacher, Shawnee Mission School District

Greetings:

We represent the Blue Valley, Shawnee Mission and Olathe school districts, and we are joining together to address the impact of Sub. for House Bill 2007 on Johnson County schools. While each of our districts is unique, the challenges this legislation presents—and the significant and nearly identical impact on our students, staff and communities—demand a united response. Together, we serve tens of thousands of students and families, and we are deeply concerned about the consequences of this legislation on our ability to deliver high-quality education and support the needs of all learners.

Last year, the Legislature made a meaningful step forward by investing \$72 million in special education (SPED), moving closer to the statutory requirement of 92% funding. We are grateful for that support. Unfortunately, HB 2007 halts that progress by failing to provide adequate new SPED funding for the 2025-26 school year—leaving schools with growing financial obligations and little to no additional support.

This failure to adequately increase SPED funding forces our districts to make damaging choices: we must divert even more dollars away from general operations, core classroom instruction, and vital student programs to fulfill the obligation left by the unfulfilled commitment and budget shortfall. This is not sustainable.

Recently, there have been suggestions that other existing sources of revenue are filling the shortfall and new funds aren't needed. However, the suggestion that these existing sources can simply be "repurposed" to fill this gap is misleading and inaccurate.

- **The Local Option Budget (LOB)** is generated from local property taxpayers to meet local needs, often with voter approval. Shifting these funds does not fulfill

the state's 92% funding obligation—it shifts the burden from the state to local taxpayers.

- **Cash balances in SPED** accounts fluctuate depending on deposits and spending. A periodic elevated cash balance does not mean extra or unused SPED funding. It reflects cash flow, not excess.

The magnitude of the shortfall is clear. Our districts have already been forced to make massive transfers to cover special education needs:

School Year	Blue Valley	Olathe	Shawnee Mission
2022-23	\$20.3M	\$36.2M	\$19.4M
2023-24	\$22.6M	\$32.1M	\$18.0M
2024-25	\$25.0M	\$34.1M	\$22.6M
Total	\$67.9M	\$102.4M	\$60.0M

Cumulative total transferred away from other student services: \$230.3 million.

This is not theoretical. These are real dollars, real impacts on students, teachers and classrooms.

Additionally, the budget also removes a variety of teacher-focused programs critical to quality education and specifically identified in the Gannon decision:

- Professional Development
- Career & Technical Education (CTE) Transportation
- Mentor Teacher Program
- Teacher Excellence Program (cutting \$5 million this year and \$5 million next year)

Stripping these programs is a direct hit to teacher quality, recruitment, and retention—particularly in a time when districts are already grappling with workforce shortages and increasing student needs.

We do appreciate the inclusion of \$262 million to fund the consumer price index (CPI) increase. But let us be clear: these funds are not a windfall. They are necessary just to maintain current service levels and meet rising costs for staff, supplies, transportation, and other essentials. Without them, districts would fall behind, unable to fulfill commitments to students and staff.

As budget negotiations begin, the Legislature must not turn its back on students with disabilities, educators and Kansas families. We strongly urge legislators to:

1. **Restore and increase SPED funding** to meet the statutory 92% obligation.
2. **Reject any suggestion that local dollars can substitute for state responsibility.**
3. **Reinstate crucial teacher support programs** that directly affect student outcomes.
4. **Protect the CPI increase** to ensure schools can operate effectively in the face of rising costs.

Failure to act will force districts to **make serious decisions as it relates to the future of programs, staff and services**, shifting the burden to local communities and undermining educational quality across Kansas.

Now is the time to honor commitments. Our students, educators and families are counting on you.

Sincerely,



Dr. Tonya Merrigan,
Blue Valley Schools



Dr. Brent Yeager,
Olathe Public Schools



Dr. Michael Schumacher,
Shawnee Mission School District