



**Senate Education Committee**  
**Testimony: KSDE Budget—Special Education Funding (written only)**  
**February 16, 2023**  
**Submitted by: Dr. Tonya Merrigan, Superintendent**

Chair Baumgardner and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit these written comments urging your support of funding special education excess costs for all districts, at the 92% level set in statute. While Blue Valley's student enrollment has decreased by 2% since 2017, **our special education enrollment has increased 17% in that same time period**, including a **6.9% increase** in the 2022-23 school year. *In our district, more than 18%—or one in five—of Blue Valley students receive special education services.*

While we have experienced a growing special education student population, our reimbursement rate has decreased and currently accounts for only **68.3%** of our district's expenditures on special education services. This funding inadequacy means that *the first \$9 million of the state's base aid per pupil funding is diverted from the district's general fund to supplement special education spending.*

The primary goal of the Blue Valley district is **to ensure every student attending our schools has the educational programming and opportunities, delivered by quality educators, to allow them to thrive** long after they leave our doors. Indeed, many parents of special education students report that it is the quality of our services that initiated their move into the district.

We commend this committee for passing a bill creating a special education task force, to more fully examine special education funding models and to make recommendations accordingly. However, no matter the methods employed to fund special education services in the future, *we ask this legislature to ensure that our student services are appropriately funded in FY24*, as we await the recommendations of the task force.

Our district continues to value our partnership with this committee, knowing we share similar values and hopes for student achievement in Kansas. **We, therefore, respectfully urge this committee to fund special education excess costs at a level that ensures these shared values may be achieved in our district**

### USD 229 Blue Valley Schools: Quick Facts

K-12 Student Enrollment	21,858	ACT District Composite Average*	23.6
Early Childhood—grade 12 Enrollment	22,412	ACT Statewide Average	19.8
Average Daily Attendance	91.7%	SAT District Average	1297
Graduation Rate	97.5%	SAT Statewide Average	1243
Teacher's with Master's Degree or Higher	74%	*with 92.3 % taking ACT	