

**Testimony on
SB 362
House Education Budget Committee**

Presented by: Cheryl L. Semmel, Executive Director

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The mission of United School Administrators of Kansas (USA|Kansas*), through collaboration of member associations, is to serve, support, and develop educational leaders and to establish USA|Kansas as a significant force to improve education.

Education administrators remain committed to ensuring that each and every child in Kansas receives a quality education that will help them reach their potential and become successful, productive adults. There are 465,000 students in our public schools that we strive to impact positively every single day. As you know, Kansas students are making unprecedented academic achievement and we are on a path of continuous improvement.

The 2010 Legislative Session promises to be one of the most challenging in the history of our state, as we face an economic downturn of global proportions. As one of those charged with leading our state through the budget and revenue crisis we are currently facing, I know you will be called on to make some of the most weighty decisions of your legislative service.

I am here today in support of SB 362. In a time of growing uncertainty over matters such as budget shortfalls, teacher shortages and time constraints, we appreciate your efforts to provide some flexibility during these extraordinary times. SB 362 honors local control and would provide the flexibility necessary for administrators and boards to make critical personnel decisions.

Administrators do not make decisions about reductions in workforce lightly and are committed to addressing workforce issues responsibly. Beyond the most immediate impact in the classroom, workforce reduction in K-12 education would result in increased unemployment in many of our communities across Kansas. K-12 education is a major workforce in Kansas – both directly and indirectly. From the district and building level personnel to contracted vendors, these individuals support local economies in many ways, whether it be supporting local retail or contributing to the tax base. In some of our small communities, with limited employment options, these individuals and families will relocate entirely – having a devastating, long-term impact on local communities.

Kansas statute 72-5437 established May 1 as the deadline by which local boards of education must notify teachers of their intent to non-renew a teacher's contract. If the local board does not notify a teacher of its intent to non-renew that teacher's contract by May 1, the

teacher is then covered by continuing contract and automatically rehired for the next year. Recent history demonstrates that the state budget has often not been determined until after May 1. As a result, school districts have had to make employment decisions (by May 1) before budgets are set.

Unfortunately, we are in a period of unprecedented economic uncertainty and budget shortfalls. In the absence of a multi-year school finance plan and with the final legislative appropriations bill not being passed until the end of April or first of May, making appropriate teacher staffing decisions under the current notification deadline has become excruciatingly difficult for school administrators and local boards. The only choice many districts have is to nonrenew all nontenured teachers on May 1, wait for final budget news, and then hope they can re-hire the staff they did not want to release in the first place. **This will have an impact on not only on school programs and operations, but will impact local communities.**

Administrators remain committed to ensuring a quality education for each child. They are communicating regularly with staff – instructional and noninstructional – as they prepare for anticipated cuts and remain focused on that common goal.

In closing, on behalf of education administrators, I would like to thank you for your continued support of education and for realizing the importance of investing in education. Preparing our children requires a shared commitment, collaboration, and open dialogue among all stakeholders. Thank you for being partners in education.

*USA|Kansas represents more than 2,000 individual members and ten member associations:

Kansas Association of Elementary School Principals
Kansas Association of Middle School Administrators
Kansas Association of School Administrators
Kansas Association of School Business Officials
Kansas Association of School Personnel Administrators
Kansas Assoc for Supervision and Curriculum Development
Kansas Association of Special Education Administrators
Kansas Association of Secondary School Principals
Kansas Council of Career and Technical Education Administrators
Kansas School Public Relations Association