January 27, 2011
Honorable members of the Senate Ways and Means Committee,

Earlier this month the Kansas Special Education Advisory Council (SEAC) discussed member concerns surrounding the loss of State and Federal special education funds. Members learned that during the current year, Kansas Special Education would be penalized 2 percent of its federal IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act) dollars as a result of the State not maintaining its required level of fiscal support (often referred to Maintenance of Effort/MOE). Next year should the State not fund the 16.7 million dollar shortfall, Kansas Special Education will be penalized an additional proportional amount of similar funds.

SEAC members fear that with a continued loss of both the state and federal monies-student with special needs will increasingly experience a reduction of needed services. Specifically, members expressed fears that special education class sizes and caseloads will significantly increase (increases have already been reported in many schools), professional learning opportunities will be further reduced hampering opportunities for special educators to utilize research based methods for most effective teaching, and teacher attrition of our highly qualified and most skilled will grow due to "burn-out" rates which are already elevated in the teaching of special education.

Thank you for considering our comments and concerns. The purpose of the Kansas State Special Education Advisory Council is to provide policy guidance to the State in respect to special education and related services for children with disabilities. The Council meets as mandated by both State and Federal Legislation. Council membership is made up of stakeholders throughout the state with the majority being individuals with disabilities and parents of children with disabilities.

Sincerely,
Katherine Kersenbrock-Ostmeyer
Special Education Advisory Chairperson