Opponent of SB491
For the Senate Education Committee
March 2nd, 2026
Autumn Faulkner
Association of Christian Schools International
Director for State Policy Engagement

My name is Autumn Faulkner, and I serve as the Director of State Policy Engagement for the Association of Christian Schools International, or ACSI. We represent over 2,250 Christian schools across the nation, including 25 here in Kansas.

We want to express our concerns regarding Senate Bill 491, the "Haylee Weissenbach Protecting Students Act." Our schools strongly support student safety. Protecting children is central to our mission. We affirm clear misconduct reporting, strengthened screening processes, appropriate background checks, and meaningful accountability for those who violate the trust placed in them. There is no disagreement on the importance of protecting students.

At the same time, SB 491, as currently written, raises serious concerns for non-public schools. First, the creation of an Education Inspector General with broad investigative authority over non-public schools represents a significant expansion of state oversight into private education. Schools within our association already operate under existing health, safety, and criminal reporting laws. Expanding duplicative layers of supervision risks blurring the line between reasonable accountability and unnecessary regulatory control.

The bill includes civil penalties for noncompliance, yet it does not clearly distinguish between willful misconduct and good-faith procedural errors. Non-public schools should not face punitive enforcement structures that fail to account for their size, governance model, and religious character.

We believe student protection can be strengthened without eroding local control or expanding state authority into the internal governance of private religious schools. In short, we support student protection, but we urge caution against regulatory expansion that unintentionally burdens or compromises the independence of non-public schools.

We respectfully ask the committee to carefully reconsider the scope of SB 491 as it applies to private schools.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Autumn Elkins Faulkner
Director for State Policy Engagement
Association of Christian Schools International