



Date of Testimony: Wednesday, February 8, 2023; Written Only Testimony

Bill Number: HB 2236: Establishing parents' right to direct the education, upbringing and moral or religious training of their children including the right to object to harmful and inappropriate educational materials.

Disposition: Opponent

From: Martha Pint, 316-259-6182; Co-President ; League of Women Voters Kansas

To: Chair Adam Thomas and members of the House Committee on Education

Thank you for the opportunity to submit the following written testimony. We stand in opposition to HB 2236. We believe approval of this bill would cause significant harm to Kansas public education.

HB 2236 is also unnecessary and will draw attention away from serious educational issues such as teacher shortages. It would limit educational opportunities and tie the hands of educators who work to provide learning that is engaging. We also believe this legislation could sow disruption as objections are logged and students are pulled from classes. And while says districts are to adopt implementing policies, what does that mean for uniformity when each district adopts its own policy. And what would it mean for teachers who remain responsible for educating those removed students?

We also believe this legislation may have the effect of vilifying teachers and making them the enemy while it caters to the few among us who are unhappy or even angry with our schools. What seems likely, should this bill become law, is that it will further drive good teachers away as it will surely be seen to question not only the professionalism of teachers, but also cast doubt as to the kind of people our teachers are. We do not believe that the vast majority of Kansans hold such thoughts about their local teachers.

We also are concerned that HB 2236 has the potential to endow each of us with the right of censorship and might further inflame the incidence of book banning. Dozens of books were banned in Kansas over the past couple of years until students fought back and saw books restored to schools, but there is still ongoing concern that efforts are underway by those who want to prescribe what others can read or see.

It was said last year, when similar legislation was considered, that the bill in question was modeled on language crafted by the conservative Heritage Foundation. It was also pointed out that a number of states were considering such bills. And now, just as then, we ask why Kansas is being asked to rewrite

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educational structure based on language provided by a non-Kansas entity. If this legislation became law, could that same entity marshal forces to flood schools with objections and requests to remove students from classes? That is a scenario suggesting a kind of chaos that works against a long-standing history of high-quality public education in Kansas.

We are reminded that when similar legislation was heard last year in a Senate committee, seven people spoke in support, but 100 people came forward and spoke against that bill. It appears that this is another attempt to push through legislation that most Kansans do not want or support.

Schools function at their highest level when parents are deeply involved in their children's education and when they work in tandem with good teaching. Existing Kansas law, known as the Kansas Parental Rights Act (KSA 38-141(b)), seeks to establish an environment that promotes exactly that by enshrining in public policy that parents shall retain the fundamental right to discharge primary control over the upbringing of their children. We support that right, and encourage that sort of involvement, but we believe HB 2236 would have quite a different outcome. We also believe most Kansans support their public schools and their teachers, and that those parents would find this legislation to be unneeded and unwanted.

Please vote no on HB 2236.