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Written Opposition to SB 66
March 6, 2023

Chairman Thomas and Members of the House Education Committee,

As a lifelong educator and President of the American Federation of Teachers - Kansas, I regrettably submit this testimony in opposition to Senate Bill 66.

However well intentioned, the proposed Interstate Teacher Mobility Compact is a short-sighted approach to the teacher shortage crisis. Instead of addressing the root causes of why our dedicated and hardworking teachers are leaving the profession, this bill would open the door to out-of-state teachers with licensing/certification standards from other member states that are inferior to those set for Kansas teachers.

The reasons behind teacher attrition are numerous and well-documented. Low pay, lack of support, overwhelming workload, limited autonomy, and unrelenting stress are just a few of the factors driving our teachers out of the profession. And let us not forget the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and the lack of respect the public and politicians have shown for the teaching profession. But perhaps the most devastating of all is the political interference that creates an unfavorable work environment for our teachers. Controversial issues such as standardized testing, public funding of private schools, banned books, and continued resistance to adequate funding are just a few examples of the political battles that have no place in our classrooms.

The practice of allowing teachers from other states with lower professional standards to enter our classrooms, with no consideration for the quality of education our students will receive, is no solution. We cannot and should not sacrifice the futures of our students for the sake of saying you did something simply by passing legislation to become a member of a compact that will have unintended consequences.

I respectfully ask that you, members of the House Education Committee, listen to the voices of the teachers in the classrooms. We know what our students need, and we know what it takes to attract and retain the best educators. Instead of passing this bill, it would be more beneficial to work together with the State Department of Education, the Kansas State Board of Education, Kansas NEA, and AFT Kansas to address the underlying causes of teacher attrition, including low pay, training, and licensing procedures.

It is time to put aside political agendas and do what is right for our students and our teachers. The future of education in Kansas is in your hands. I ask you to make the right choice. Thank you.

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