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House Committee on Education
Rep. Adam Thomas, Chair

Opponent Testimony, Written
HB2732– Authorizing school districts to employ or accept chaplains as volunteers.

Chair Thomas and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide opponent testimony on HB2732.

Mainstream OPPOSES HB2732. This proposal would authorize school districts to use public dollars to employ chaplains or to accept volunteer chaplains to provide services to students. This would violate Kansans First Amendment right to religious freedom by endorsing the presence of faith-based staff and volunteers in our public schools. Further, it creates a setting that prioritizes faith-based resources in a public school environment that is constitutionally protected from favoring one religion over another, or even favoring religion over non-religion.

The noted “support, services and programs” within HB2732 could grant chaplains without an education license broad access to students. Schools already hire appropriately trained staff, including counselors and social workers, to provide supports and services without a faith-based affiliation. Schools are also already able to bring in community volunteers, including chaplains, for school projects and programs. HB2732 serves no additional purpose, nor does it add benefit to our public schools, beyond the explicit inclusion of – and in the case of employment, the use of public tax dollars for – faith-based individuals into our schools.

For these reasons, Mainstream opposes HB2732. We urge you to reject this proposal to favor faith-based staff and volunteers in our public schools and violate Kansans’ religious freedom.

Thank you,

Laurel Burchfield
Mainstream