

Proponent Testimony for HB 2719
House Education Committee
By Linda Highland
February 19, 2024

Thank you, Chairman Thomas and Education Committee Members, for this opportunity to speak in support of HB 2719 which extends the notification time to parents from 4 months to 6 months for schools to show surveys, tests, questionnaires and examinations given during the school day that contain questions about the personal and private attitudes, values, beliefs or practices of the student or the student's family. Parents must then give written notification if their child is allowed to partake in such questioning. Students must be informed that they have the right to decline to take behavioral tests and not suffer any adverse consequences for the decision. I am in support of this Student Data Privacy Act, first passed in 2014, with a most important improvement in 2022, when the above change to notify parents happened instead of expecting parents to give permission without knowing for what they were giving permission.

Today I am asking for an additional change to HB 2719 of one word. On line 11 where it states "(a) A nonacademic," please strike "A nonacademic" and replace it with "No." This was the original intent of the law that passed in 2022, and that substitution "A nonacademic" happened in the conference committee. Because of this change the statute only catches three surveys, The Kansas Communities That Care, the National Youth Risk Behavior Survey from the CDC, and Family Engagement Survey. All three are part of a Climate Measures Report KSDE compiles.

There is much more questioning and surveying that goes on with social emotional Learning deeply embedded into the K-12 curriculum. It was my intent with the 2022 Student Data Privacy Act that any other probing of students with questioning throughout the day would be shown to the parents before being given. Since 2022, SEL has advanced to enormous levels of questioning students, including even "circle time" meant for students to disclose private thoughts with other students. Parents are not fully aware of what is happening in their child's classroom as it relates to SEL. The change of those two words to "No" will be the deciding difference to fully inform the parents of the learning management programs in which their student is partaking.

This statute is not designed to show parents testing in any other subject areas, such as Math, ELA, or Science.

A few states have acknowledged that the SEL testing and probing into the minds of children may be a violation of federal legislation, the Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment (PPRA). Attached is information about this legislation. I tell you this because I feel PPRA gives complete support for Kansas students not being subjected to KSDE's comprehensive SEL curriculum. Kansas was the first state in the nation to comprehensively adopt SEL for K-12. Many states, including Missouri, have not adopted SEL. At the very least, schools should be required to show the SEL curriculum and classroom learning management systems to parents. The change in the bill to "No" will make that happen. SEL may also be a violation of the Kansas statute on Biometric Data Collection, which is also attached.

Lately, the NGOs who greatly profit by instilling SEL into America's schools and selling their plans to state school boards, are now introducing the original goal of SEL, religion. That's correct, SEL is bringing a new age religion into our schools. According to the Fetzer Institute, "now 30 years later, we are working to add pluralistic, spiritual development into the whole child curricula." The Fetzer Institute along with many well-funded foundations formed the original Consortium to Advance Social Emotional Learning (CASEL). This is the organization whose guidelines KSDE fully support and initiate into our Kansas schools through accreditation mandates of SEL being their number one priority. There are many examples that CASEL gives on what religion looks like in the school day. This needs to end.

Thank you for working to improve the Student Data Protection Act.