

**Testimony in Opposition to HB 2238**

**By Erik Graefe, Junction City, KS**

**Senate Committee on Education, Sen. Molly Baumgardner, Chair**

March 6, 2023

Mme. Chair, members of the committee:

Thank you for allowing me to share these words as you consider House Bill 2238. My name is Erik Graefe, and I serve Zion United Church of Christ in Junction City as pastor. In addition, I am the head boys basketball coach at Abilene High School.

From the point of view of one tasked with leading a group of people striving to take seriously the life and teaching of Jesus of Nazareth, I am not able to reconcile any law that would exclude a child from an educational opportunity based on who they are. Working with young people every day in the schools, I'm often overwhelmed by how many of our children are lonely, feel isolated, anxious, and unsure about the world we've created for them. Certainly, this has always been a part of growing up, but I can tell you without equivocation that it has never been more difficult to be a young person.

Participation in athletics offers young people a chance to learn about themselves in ways more profound and lasting than a typical classroom experience. Sacrificing one's personal agenda for the good of a team, giving oneself physically, mentally, and spiritually for a shared goal, and being overwhelmed with the utter joy of achievement and the utter pain of loss in the context of a group that loves one another are just a few of the experiences offered by participation in athletics. From the point of view of a coach, these are the learning opportunities most capable of touching our young people at their core. Keeping any of our children from this opportunity is selfish and cruel.

Thank you,

Erik Graefe  
Junction City, KS