

March 7, 2023

**In-Person Testimony to Senate Education Committee**

**Honorable Chair, Senator Molly Baumgardner**

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Room 445-S, State Capitol Building

**Opposed HB 2236 – to overriding policies established by locally elected officials.**

Hearing: Thursday, March 9, 2023, 1:30 PM Room 144-S

Honorable Chair Baumgardner and Committee Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide remote testimony regarding HB 2236.

Kansas PTA has a long history of promoting parent engagement and supporting home-school collaboration. Kansas PTA is an advocate of parents right to direct the education, upbringing and moral or religious training of their children. However, Kansas PTA finds the application of this statement in relation to public education to be highly problematic and in conflict with our [Standing Positions and Legislative Priorities](#). This bill is more likely to incite disruption than to foster meaningful partnership.

Kansas parents currently have the right to direct their children’s education, upbringing and such. Meaning, parents have the right to choose whether to send their children to accredited public schools (which include virtual and alternative school options), to private schools (accredited or nonaccredited), to home school.

- To state the obvious, parents have the most direct control over curriculum and learning goals in a home school setting.
- Private school systems have independent authority to determine their educational goals and curricula. The role and degree of any one individual parent’s oversight is determined by that private school’s governing body. However, no due process rights for a parent or student are required in a private school system.
- The oversight of public funds used for preK-12 public education are in the hands of eligible Kansas voters. The process for determining what students should know and be able to do upon graduation in the public school system is embedded in [Article VI of the Kansas Constitution](#). These decisions are guided by members of the state and local boards of education, which are elected positions and accountable to all eligible voters. These elected officials serve as a governing board to the work of educators, who provide

the professional day-to-day management of teaching and learning. Parents, students and staff in Kansas public schools have due process rights. A student cannot be kicked out, unenrolled, nor transitioned out of the public school system for filing a complaint.

This proposed change to public education policy, HB 2236, disregards the authority granted to freely elected members of the state and local boards of education, by virtue of the Kansas Constitution (Legislative Priority 1). The state board of education adopted the 2015 [Kansans Can Vision](#) with extensive input from a broad base of stakeholders, including feedback gathered from more than 2,000 parents, educators, legislators, school board members, business community members, and more ([KSDE](#)). In 2021, the State Board directed Kansas Commissioner of Education, Dr. Randy Watson, to facilitate another round of community conversations on the state's vision for K-12 education. Data gathered from [50 events across the state affirmed](#) continued support for the Kansans Can Vision.

Accredited schools and school districts are expected to adhere to the State Board of Education graduation requirements to remain in good standing. A number of these requirements are by direct action of the Kansas legislature. HB 2236 makes no mention of these explicit legislative priorities in relation to parents' conflicting beliefs, values or principles:

- 72-3218 relating to Rose Capacities/mandatory subjects for accredited schools
- 72-3214 required subjects in accredited elementary schools
- 72-3217 requires citizenship/civics in accredited schools
- 72-3219 Academic achievement testing mandate
- 72-3221 KS challenge to secondary schools act (post-secondary opportunities for students)
- 72-3231 Character development program
- 72-3233 Celebrate freedom week
- 72-3236 Financial literacy
- 72-3237 Disability awareness and anti-bullying
- 72-3255 thru 72-3258 Advancement in computing knowledge act
- 72-3261 Legislative declaration on academic achievement and excellence in education
- 72-3262 Every Student can Read Act
- [72-64c05](#) Provision of public school financing system; financing resources and methods.

Serious caution is warranted, given this bill's potential to devalue the accredited Kansas high school diploma. Language in this bill is unclear, as to whether post-secondary institutions and employers would even know which students completed the graduation requirements and those that opted out of classes. *Lines 15-16. "No student's academic records shall be adversely affected by withdrawal from a class or educational program."* Kansas high school graduates could be unfairly perceived as less than ready for college and career, compared to their peers across the country.

Further, how could Kansas parents expect their children to be treated fairly under the terms of this bill? *Lines 12-13. "... the basis that such material or activity or impairs the parent's sincerely held beliefs, values or principles and to withdraw such student from the class or educational program in which the material or activity is being provided."* Consistency and equity would be nearly impossible to uphold.

Kansas PTA strongly urges members of this committee to vote NO on the bill, to uphold the Kansas Constitution and to protect the value of a Kansas diploma. Thank you for your consideration.

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***THE PTA POSITION***

*Kansas PTA is a nonpartisan association that promotes the welfare of children and youth. The PTA does not endorse any candidate or political party. Rather, we advocate for policies and legislation that affect Kansas youth in alignment with our legislative platform and priorities. [PTA mission and purpose](#) have remained the same since our inception over 100 years ago, focused on facilitating every child's potential and empowering families and communities to advocate for all children.*