

Opponent Testimony of HB2236
For the Senate Education Committee
March 8, 2023
Jacqueline Kennedy
Parent

Chair Baumgardner and Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in opposition of House Bill 2236 on behalf of parents with children in Kansas public schools.

Recently, our school district imposed a Parents' Bill of Rights and the results have been detrimental to the climate in our schools. When our school board first introduced the Parents' Bill of Rights, many parents pointed out that the protections a Bill of Rights proposes are already in place. Parents have always had the *responsibility* of guiding their children's "education, upbringing, and moral or religious training." As a parent, I have the ability to attend "Meet the Teacher" events to learn the expectations and proposed assignments as school begins. My student brings home classroom rules, lessons, and assignment expectations for me to preview. Topics that may be perceived as sensitive or controversial require a signed parent permission form. I can attend Parent/Teacher Conferences to discuss any concerns I have. I have the ability to request alternate assignments if I object to subject matter being taught. I do not need a Parents' Bill of Rights to guarantee any of this. The teachers and administrators already provide these things.

The purpose of a Parents' Bill of Rights was presented as a succinct document explaining all of the ways I can be involved in my student's education, but in actuality, it is an oppressive policy that allows religious beliefs to be imposed on *every* student. We are all granted the freedom of religion under our US Constitution. The First Amendment also provides for the freedom *from* religion. A public education should never be influenced by any religious beliefs. As a parent, it is my responsibility to provide that religious education. Allowing parents to protest curriculum based on their individual religious or moral beliefs denies our students the exposure to a robust education.

I trust our professional educators to curate curriculum that meets state standards, challenges our students, and helps create intelligent, curious, and empathetic members of society. I would never assume my religious beliefs should guide the education of our students as a whole. If a title is inappropriate in my eyes, I can request an alternate title that meets the assignment requirements. I do not get to demand that alternate assignment for everyone else's student. The rights of our students are not subordinate to the rights of an individual parent.

The implementation of a Parents' Bill of Rights has created an immense amount of tension between teachers and administrators who fear opposition from our school board and parents. Constant concern that a title will be seen as inappropriate by one parent places undue stress on our teachers. At a time when educators are leaving the profession earlier than planned, a Parents' Bill of Rights provides one more reason to leave. We are losing quality educators because their professional training and passion for teaching is subjected to the whim of any parent who objects to a lesson based on moral or religious grounds. We should be working to encourage collaboration between parents, educators, and policy-makers; not creating policies that make any group the watchdog of another group. Collaboration is what will effect positive change and help retain quality educators.

Thank you for allowing me to voice my opinion. A Parents' Bill of Rights is completely unnecessary and succeeds in creating tension between the very groups who should be working together to educate our kids. For the reasons detailed above, I ask you to oppose HB 2236.