

Kayla Josefiak HB 2103 Testimony

His name was Hercules, my very first show steer—a gentle giant of an animal. I'll never forget the bittersweet feeling as I walked him onto the trailer after the premium sale. Tears welled in my 7-year-old eyes as I said goodbye, proud of the early mornings and long hours I had poured into him but grieving the end of a chapter. What I didn't realize then was how much Hercules and my 4-H experiences were preparing me for life—teaching lessons about hard work, resilience, and showing up, even when it's tough.

These moments weren't just life lessons; they were critical academic lessons as well. Tracking expenses for my livestock project applied math practices. Researching feed rations was science in action. Explaining my project to a judge sharpened my public speaking skills. These weren't just extracurricular activities; they were real-world applications of classroom learning.

That's why recognizing 4-H students' participation as valid school absences is essential. Just as students miss school for chess meets and Scholar's Bowl and athletes miss school for games and tournaments, 4-H students need and deserve support for activities that help them grow as leaders and problem-solvers. Legislative efforts, like House Bill 2103, recognize that agricultural science activities, FFA events, and 4-H competitions are integral to education and ***should*** count as valid school absences.

Through 4-H, I didn't just raise animals—they raised me. I learned to set goals, work tirelessly, and take responsibility for both success ***and*** failure. Mornings spent feeding calves, cleaning stalls, and rinsing animals weren't just chores; they were building blocks for my character.

Looking back, I see God's hand in those years. The barn truly became a place of quiet reflection, where I processed struggles and leaned on Him for strength. Setbacks—whether a sick animal or a tough show—taught me to trust His plan. Those challenges strengthened my faith and prepared me for His calling.

I wouldn't be the certified life coach and professional speaker I am today without those experiences. The barn and show ring taught me to prepare, think on my feet, and present myself authentically—skills I now use to encourage and empower women every single day.

Now, as a parent, 4-H mom, and advocate, I watch the next generation step into the same show rings I once did. My children, nieces, and nephews are pouring their hearts into projects, learning the same invaluable lessons that I did. Watching them reminds me why 4-H is about more than ribbons and banners—it's about life skills that last far beyond the show ring.

One of the most ***incredible*** things about 4-H is how *seamlessly* it aligns with the classroom. In 2013, Kansas became the second state in the nation to adopt the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS), which focus on hands-on learning, critical thinking, and connecting

knowledge to real-world applications. These standards include crosscutting concepts and science and engineering practices—exactly what 4-H emphasizes in its projects.

When 4-H kids calculate feed rations, design a small engine, or analyze animal health, they're applying math, science, and engineering principles in ways that mirror NGSS. They're solving problems, thinking critically, and making connections across disciplines. As a former secondary science teacher, I've seen firsthand how these real-world applications bring classroom concepts to life and deepen students' understanding of the material.

Hercules was more than my first show steer—he was my first great teacher. But the real Teacher, I see now, was God, working in the background to prepare me for His plans. Through Him and through 4-H, I learned that hard work, responsibility, and faith are the foundation of a meaningful life. Now, I see those same lessons taking root in the next generation, reminding me why 4-H matters so much.

Thank you.