

From: [Landon McGee](#)
To: [House Education](#)
Subject: HB 2299 - Opponent - Written-Only Testimony
Date: Saturday, February 8, 2025 3:22:30 PM

Dear Kansas House Education Committee,

I am writing to you as an educator and a voter in Douglas County to oppose the HB 2299.

This bill, while it purports to be a defense against antisemitism, will in effect be aimed squarely at chilling and even censoring speech on our public college campuses, which educators and citizens across the state of Kansas hold up as forums for thoughtful and genuine disagreement. This is central to our ability to function as educational institutions.

Antisemitism, like any other form of religious, ethnic, or racial bigotry, is addressed through existing regimes of law—as well as the social responsibility that we feel as campus communities to protect our students. It is a profound error, however, to conflate, as this bill obviously does, antisemitism with any kind of robust criticism of the state of Israel. No nation state ought to be exempt from criticism, especially on college campuses where we attempt to honestly and carefully form criticisms of power, so that we might, as a country, exercise our own power in a way that lives up to an idea of human rights and equality that is inherent in the American project. To make an exception for the state of Israel, even above and beyond our own country, seems to me to be a grave error, one that is made due to fear more than any genuine concern for the safety of our Jewish students, many of whom themselves have made genuine criticisms of Israel.

Perhaps most worrying, the enforcement mechanisms for this bill, including empowering the Attorney General to bring charges directly against members of our campus communities for their speech, are ridiculous. I want to appeal specifically to the conservative members of the committee who have, in recent years, expressed concerns about the impingement of free speech on college campuses and online. This bill is a more genuine threat to free speech on Kansas campuses than anything we've seen in the past few years. To attempt to force agreement where there is disagreement on our campuses will not succeed—instead, it will solidify a view in the minds of students and teachers that the state of Kansas is not a place that takes open, free dialogue seriously, and harden some of the very opinions that this bill seeks to address.

As an educator, I want to make it clear: the state government needs to trust educators to do the educating in this state. We are experts who work tirelessly to build an environment where free inquiry and learning can happen, and any law that disrupts that environment, however well-intentioned, will only break down the complex, rich community that we are building for the future of Kansas. To threaten legal action against, in essence, reasonable and constitutionally protected speech, is beyond the pale. It evinces a naive confusion about how civil debate and inquiry really work—things that I would expect elected officials to understand.

I appreciate the opportunity to exercise my candor in this forum; thank you to the committee for hearing the voices of everyday Kansans. Again, I encourage you all to oppose the passage of HB 2299.

All my best,

Landon McGee
2/8/2025