

Senate Bill 76 Opposition Testimony (Oral)

House Committee on Education

March 4, 2025

Angie Powers, private citizen

Chair Estes and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to share my opposition testimony with you today. My name is Angie Powers, and I have been teaching in Kansas public schools for the last 25 years. Three weeks ago, I provided testimony in the Senate Committee on Education against this same bill. Once the hearing ended and the committee room started to clear, a young adult approached me. I didn't immediately recognize the person, but after they told me that I was their teacher a few years ago, we visited and the student found their place in my memory. The student shared they weren't out when they were in my class, as they were still trying to figure out who they were. But they knew that I was an educator who made it clear that everyone was welcome, that they belonged—and that made a difference for them. They told me it mattered more than I could have known at the time. That's why I'm here today.

Senate Bill 76 doesn't make schools better learning environments for students. What it does is add government interference into things that educators and families are already figuring out together. It adds more paperwork, more red tape, and more reasons for educators to be afraid of doing the wrong thing—not because they aren't working with families, but because the rules keep shifting underneath them. A Spanish educator who lets students pick Spanish names, an educator calling a nickname that parents and students already use at home—suddenly, these simple, everyday moments become bureaucratic hurdles. And when educators are buried in red tape, it takes away from the time and energy we should be spending on what really matters: teaching, supporting students, and building strong relationships with families.

Schools and parents don't need the state stepping in to tell us how to navigate these conversations. Do these conversations get hard and complicated at times? Of course. But we will continue to figure it out, because that's what communities do. This bill doesn't create conditions for students, educators, and families to have real conversations about a specific student's need. What it does is create confusion, fear, and unnecessary barriers between students and the adults who are there to support them.

Every student deserves the chance to feel like they belong at school. They deserve to focus on learning instead of worrying about whether they fit within somebody else's narrow definition of who they can be. That's why I urge you to vote no on Senate Bill 76.

Thank you for our time and consideration.

Angie Powers