

My name is Amy Cawvey, and I am a current school board member at Lansing USD 469. My testimony is my own as a board member and does not necessarily represent the views of the board.

I support Senate Bill 76, the Given Name Act, and would like to share my experience with these issues at a local level.

When I was first elected to my position, it came to my attention through email correspondence and interactions with school staff that staff members were being told to withhold pronouns or name changes that were different than what corresponded with the student's birth certificate. Specifically, staff were told to withhold this information from parents at upcoming parent/teacher conferences. Withholding this information from parents is not only wrong but violates the parents' Constitutional right to direct the upbringing and care of their children. This conduct also violates FERPA if the staff or district is keeping part of the student's records from parents.

Because of these findings, USD 469 implemented a Parents Bill of Rights and gender policy, prohibiting this practice. If parents or guardians want their child to use a different pronoun or name different from the name listed on their birth certificate, they can provide written permission to the district, and once received, staff and students may address the student by the desired pronoun and/or name but are not required to. This protects against compelled speech, as a district must not force students or staff to use language they find objectionable.

I support and understand the need for local control by our school boards. However, when we take office, as do the members of this committee, we take an oath to defend and follow the United States Constitution. By allowing school staff to violate FERPA or the rights of a parent, board members are not following the Constitution. Senate Bill 76 is necessary to provide statutory requirements to districts, requiring them to protect the rights of parents, staff, and students equally. Violations of these rights have impacts not only on individuals but also on the individual districts as shown by Kansas courts awarding damages to plaintiffs whose rights were violated. Consequently, the taxpayer is penalized because the district kept secrets from parents and for infringing on an employee's free speech.

I ask you to vote yes on Senate Bill 76.

Amy Cawvey
USD 469 Lansing School Board Member
Sent from my iPhone