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SB114 Authorizing nonpublic and virtual school students to participate in ancillary public school activities and making it unlawful for the Kansas state high school activities association and school districts to discriminate against such students based on enrollment status.

Proponent

Oral in-person

March 5, 2025

Thank you, Chairwomen Estes, and committee. My name is Bryce Steffan, I am a Kansas Academy of Math and Science (KAMS) senior and an Ellinwood High School senior. I am here today to request your support of SB 114, which will grant KAMS students the right to fully participate in all KSHSAA events. KAMS is a premier early college program designed to provide a STEM-focused education experience for gifted 11th and 12th grade students.

During my sophomore year at Ellinwood High School while choosing the classes I would be taking the following school year, I found myself disappointed. Not because I was not placed in the classes I wanted, or because my friends would not be in the same classes, but because the classes were not as challenging as I was hoping they would be. Ellinwood High School is quite small, lacking offer of any AP or honors classes, and offering merely a few dual-credit classes. I needed something more, something different—a challenge. My high school counselor recommended that I investigate KAMS. I quickly learned what KAMS was all about. KAMS is an early college program in which I would be living on Fort Hays State University's campus while taking college courses with traditional college students, but remaining fully enrolled in Ellinwood High School. This opportunity involved participating in university research for two years and being propelled four semesters into my higher education.

There was one huge drawback that weighed heavily on me. I had to give up participating in KSHSAA events. I was very involved in three varsity sports, scholars bowl, forensics, and I had even just qualified for The Kansas State Track and Field Championship in four events. At 16 years old I had to choose between obtaining the best possible education or enjoying my activities. This was very difficult for me to do because sports taught me self-confidence, grit, and toughness. Something that I know I will need as I pursue my dream of becoming a doctor. However, I knew I could not let the golden opportunity of attending KAMS pass. I joined

KAMS, found the academic challenges I was looking for and am currently involved in a mitochondrial genome-based research project and have made tons of friends.

However, something still weighed on me, could I really not do sports. I researched KAMS student participation in KSHSAA activities and to my surprise discovered that the Kansas Legislature nor KSHSAA actually prohibited KAMS students from participating. Therefore, we sought approval from KSHSAA to allow KAMS students permission to participate and were denied. SB 114 would give KAMS students the right to fully participate in KSHSAA activities and allow high academic achieving students like me the opportunity to participate in KSHSAA activities, just like every other high school student.

I would like you to consider this bill and pass it in a manner that would make it effective immediately. By doing such, it would allow me to have an opportunity to compete in post season competition and hopefully earn my spot in the Kansas State Track and Field Championship.

I will stand for questions.