

★ MAINSTREAM

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HB2034– Authorizing school districts to employ or accept such persons as volunteers.

Opponent Testimony, Oral

Wednesday, January 14, 2026, 1:30 PM

House Committee on Education

Rep. Susan Estes, Chair

Chair Estes and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide opponent testimony on HB2034.

Mainstream was founded over 30 years ago by faith and community leaders who warned about the intrusion of narrow, extremist religious views into our government and public institutions. In the following decades, Mainstream members have fought to protect our religious freedoms and maintain strong church-state separation because Kansans value their freedom to live as they see fit without the overreach of government or religion into their personal lives.

Mainstream OPPOSES HB2034. This proposal would authorize school districts to use public dollars to employ chaplains or to accept volunteer chaplains to provide services to students. This would violate Kansans' First Amendment right to religious freedom by endorsing the presence of faith-based staff and volunteers in our public schools. Further, it creates a setting that prioritizes faith-based resources in a public school environment that is constitutionally protected from favoring one religion over another, or even favoring religion over non-religion.

The noted “support, services and programs” within HB2034 could grant chaplains without an education license broad access to students. Schools already hire appropriately trained staff, including counselors and social workers, to provide supports and services without a faith-based affiliation. Schools are also already able to bring in community volunteers, including chaplains, for school projects and programs. HB2034 serves no additional purpose, nor does it add benefit to our public schools, beyond the explicit inclusion of – and in the case of employment, the use of public tax dollars for – faith-based individuals into our schools.

For these reasons, Mainstream opposes HB2034. We urge you to reject this proposal to favor faith-based staff and volunteers in our public schools and violate Kansans' religious freedom.

Thank you,

Laurel Burchfield, Mainstream Coalition