



**Oral Opponent Testimony on
HB 2034,**

Authorizing school districts to employ or accept chaplains as volunteers

In

House Education Committee

By

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Madam Chair and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in opposition to HB 2034. KASB's permanent member policies, reaffirmed in November 2026, direct our testimony on this bill:

We believe that our system [of local and state control of public education by boards of education] is a cornerstone of American democracy. Essential to that democracy and to the public nature of public education is the separation of church and state set forth in the Constitution of the United States, and we oppose any attempt to erode that separation through the public schools.

Public school students come from all different faith backgrounds. Allowing districts to choose a chaplain means the district is choosing a single faith background to serve its students. Because public schools are for ALL students, they must be welcoming places for children from any faith background, and even for children who do not have a faith background at all. Moreover, decisions about a child's spiritual guidance are very much the decisions of parents, not of school boards.

We're also concerned that the potential provision of volunteer chaplains in public schools could unintentionally result in complications for our shared goal of supporting the mental health needs of public-school students. While students can and should visit with their pastors outside of school for spiritual counseling to help address mental health issues, we would not like to see the presence of volunteer chaplains be considered a substitute for the in-school presence of school counselors, school psychiatrists, or other school mental health professionals.

KASB is a non-profit service organization built on an abiding belief in Kansas public schools. We have put the needs of students and K-12 leaders first since 1917.

Kansas Association of School Boards

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