

Conferee: The Very Reverend Torey Lightcap, Grace Episcopal Cathedral

Contact: tlightcap@gracecathedraltopeka.org

Regarding: HB 2034 (Authorizing school districts to employ chaplains or accept such persons as volunteers.)

Position: Opponent

Date: January 12, 2026

HB 2034 easily violates the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment, which bars the government from making any law “respecting an establishment of religion.” This has long been understood to be a fundamental check on government interference and overreach.

Further, any chaplain functioning in a public school would come with a given set of biases and would be unable to serve in the absence of an existing religious/spiritual worldview. While they do attest to fitness for service generally, most forms of credentialing such as ordination status, licensure, and evidence of training/continuing education are also normatively statements of bias reinforcing those worldviews.

Finally, this bill does nothing to restrain public school chaplains from undesired proselytizing, nor does it respect the rights of those students, staff, and administrators whose preferred view is that of no religion whatsoever.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on HB 2034.