

Hi I am Paige Lovato. I am a proponent for HB 2034 and would like to give in person testimony. I attend USD #241 in a small town in western Kansas called Sharon Springs. I am currently in the 8th grade. I have written today because I believe that chaplains would make a great impact on Kansas schools! I have personally experienced bullying from teachers and students. When I was in the 5th grade the teacher and students were joking around. We were playing a little game when the teacher looked at me and said "loser" and I said "what?" He said "I'm sorry for the wrong pronunciation. Let me fix it, Miss loser." I was very shocked by what he had just said and it really hurt me. I was very young and didn't think it was a joke which impacted my life negatively. That is where a chaplain would have come into my life greatly! The summer I was going into 6th grade my step dad got paralyzed. Which made my mental health terrible, and at that time I started getting bullied severely by students. I would get told things that were terrible like "At least my dad can walk" or "I bet your mom is cheating on him now." I had people I could talk to but they all lost my trust after they started rumors. I was struggling really bad and I just needed someone and somewhere I could feel safe and comfortable at. After a while the bullying stopped but it wasn't because of the school. I went to the school many times and nothing changed. When I went to the bible read-o-thon I heard about a bill to allow chaplains in Kansas schools. I decided to do some research and realized the amazing impact they have made in schools. They help with mental health, suicides, attitudes, grades, substance abuse, reduce violence, and a closer relationship with the religion you believe in. I know a chaplain would have made my life easier and it would have made my mental health better. Teens usually have a really tough time trusting people so If they had a safe place to go to it will make them feel better and safer. Thank you for taking your time to read and listen to my testimony on what I believe that will make a great and positive impact in Kansas schools!

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