



National School Chaplain Association

January 9, 2025

## Written Testimony in Support of HB2034

**Submitted by Rocky J. Malloy**

Chief Executive Officer

National School Chaplain Association

Chairman and Members of the Committee,

My name is Rocky J. Malloy, and I serve as Chief Executive Officer of the National School Chaplain Association, the largest civilian school chaplain organization serving public education systems in the United States and internationally.

I respectfully submit this testimony in strong support of **HB2034**, proposed by Representative **Bill Rhiley**.

HB2034 is a **permissive, liberty-preserving bill**. It does not mandate religion, compel participation, or impose a chaplain on any school district. Instead, it affirms the constitutional authority of local school boards in **Kansas** to deploy school chaplains **if they so choose**, consistent with the First Amendment's protection of the free exercise of religion.

Importantly, HB2034 allows school districts to utilize chaplains **either as compensated professionals or as volunteers**, at the discretion of the local governing authority. This flexibility is essential. It enables districts to design chaplain programs that meet their unique needs, resources, and community expectations—without imposing a fiscal mandate or restricting access to professionally trained chaplains where compensation is appropriate.

Across the nation, faith-based mental and emotional care provided by professionally trained chaplains has produced **measurable, positive social outcomes**. In districts served by National School Chaplain Association chaplains, schools have documented:

- Significant reductions in student violence at school and at home
- Substantial decreases in suicide ideation and self-harm
- Reduced drug, alcohol, and substance abuse
- Lower rates of teen pregnancy
- Improved academic performance and student behavior
- Increased teacher job satisfaction, attendance, and retention



These outcomes occur because chaplains provide **trauma-informed, relationship-centered care** that complements, rather than replaces, educators, counselors, and administrators.

Chaplains are uniquely positioned to offer continuity, trust, and moral grounding in environments where anxiety, isolation, and cultural instability increasingly affect students and staff alike.

Chaplains already serve in this same capacity throughout American public life, in the military, healthcare systems, corrections, disaster response, and other government settings, sometimes as volunteers, sometimes as paid professionals, always without coercion and always with constitutional legitimacy.

It is also worth noting that similar school chaplain legislation has already been enacted into law in four states and formally introduced in more than thirty states nationwide. This reflects a growing recognition that schools must be given **flexibility, not restriction**, to address social, emotional, and mental health challenges.

HB2034 does not expand government authority. It restrains it, by preventing unnecessary interference with local decision-making and constitutionally protected freedoms.

For these reasons, I strongly urge the Committee to support HB2034 and preserve the liberty of Kansas school districts to serve their communities in the manner they deem most appropriate.

Respectfully submitted,



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