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

Opponent – Written only

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.

I have been a Board Certified Chaplain since 2017. Certification for Chaplains through our national professional organization, the Association of Professional Chaplains, is a rigorous process that includes theological reflection, demonstrated understanding of professional ethics, and demonstration of practical skills. Written essays, collaboration with one's faith community, and an interview with a panel of Certified chaplains are included in the process. All this is to say that board Certified chaplains have demonstrated professional expertise and ethics in order to claim the title of chaplain. In addition, annual continuing education and reporting are required.

Nowhere in this bill do I see requirements for the training, expertise, and ethical standards of chaplaincy for those who might apply to serve in this role. I see no measures of accountability or professional standards. This concerns me greatly as a professional who has worked hard to earn the title of Chaplain and serve in the role with care and consideration.

I have personally seen the damage that well-meaning people can do when they consider themselves a Chaplain, but do not have the proper training. Would you want a person to perform heart surgery on you without proper training? In the same way, chaplains need professional training and expertise. When dealing with issues of faith, meaning, purpose, and value, with people who are vulnerable and in need, great harm can be done without adequate preparation. When I served as the supervisor in a Chaplaincy Department, even the volunteers were required to have specific qualifications.

I strongly oppose this legislation and its absence of standards of care.

Again, I oppose this legislation due to its disregard for standards of care, proper training and education, and a lack of understanding of the role and expertise of chaplains. Thank you for your consideration of my testimony.