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HB 2428: An Act concerning postsecondary educational institutions; requiring the state board of regents to establish curricula and designate courses at postsecondary educational institutions; relating to DEI-CRT-related courses and content; requiring the study of American institutions and certain programs at freshman orientations concerning free speech

Opponent of HB 2428

Oral in person testimony

Feb 3, 2026 1:30pm House Education Committee

Good afternoon Thank you committee members for the opportunity to testify today.

My name is Tonya Ricklefs, and I am President of the Kansas Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers. I am here to speak in opposition to HB 2428.

In recent years, this Legislature has appropriately focused on workforce shortages in critical areas such as child welfare, education, and behavioral health. Social workers are central to that workforce. According to a 2022 Kansas Health Institute issue brief, licensed clinical social workers make up nearly half of Kansas's behavioral health providers. Yet Kansas faces severe shortages—some regions have fewer than 50 licensed clinical social workers, and even in northeast Kansas, the ratio is more than 2,000 residents to one provider. Those shortages are projected to grow.

An education in social work requires students to understand the diverse backgrounds, life circumstances, and communities of the Kansans they will serve—from towns of 15 people to our largest cities. This education is practical preparation for effective service delivery.

Social work programs must meet national accreditation standards. HB 2428 puts those programs at risk by restricting required instruction and participation related to diversity, equity, and inclusion—content that is embedded in accreditation requirements. If programs fall out of compliance, Kansas risks losing social work programs altogether.

When programs disappear, students leave Kansas to obtain their degrees—and we know from our member surveys that students educated in Kansas are far more likely to stay in Kansas, filling critical workforce gaps. Losing these programs directly undermines the Legislature's stated workforce goals.

While the bill contains limited exceptions, they are narrowly written and tied to specific program titles. Many accredited programs—including social work—may not clearly qualify. At a minimum, the language must be revised to ensure Kansas universities can meet national accreditation standards.

For these reasons, we urge you to vote no on HB 2428. We also welcome the opportunity to work with the committee on language that protects academic accreditation while supporting Kansas's workforce needs.

Thank you, and I am happy to stand for questions.