



AMERICAN ATHEISTS

February 3, 2026

The Honorable Rep. Susan Estes
Chair, House Education Committee
300 SW 10th Avenue
Topeka, Kansas 66612

Re: OPPOSE HB 2428, Undermining Quality of Higher Education

Dear Chairperson Estes and Members of the House Education Committee:

American Atheists, on behalf of its constituents in Kansas, writes in opposition to HB 2428, a controversial and hyper partisan bill that would undermine the quality of education in the state. Despite the claim that this bill will end discriminatory practices in Kansas's higher education system, it will exacerbate the problem by limiting necessary discussions, preventing administrators from taking action against discriminatory conduct, and teaching a censored view of American history. Our nation's universities should promote critical thinking and encourage the free exchange of ideas, not rewrite history and limit free speech. We strongly urge you to reject this far-reaching government censorship bill.

American Atheists is a national civil rights organization that works to achieve religious equality for all Americans by protecting what Thomas Jefferson called the "wall of separation" between government and religion created by the First Amendment. We strive to create an environment where atheists are accepted as members of our nation's communities and where bigotry against our community is seen as abhorrent and unacceptable. We promote understanding of atheists through education, outreach, and community-building, and work to end the stigma associated with being an atheist in America. As advocates for religious equality and intellectual freedom, American Atheists objects to government censorship of history, the undermining of educational quality to serve political agendas, and the erosion of efforts to include all Americans in society regardless of their background.

HB 2428 cynically assails legitimate efforts to ensure all Kansas students are included, represented, and respected at their universities. This bill would censor needed conversations about the experience of Black, Latino, Indigenous American, and LGBTQ+ communities, and prohibit Kansas universities from providing an accurate and well-rounded education. Our nation's institutions of higher education are unique because,

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unlike the majority of the world, they require students to take general education courses that provide fluency in humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences regardless of their major.¹ This knowledge is essential to prepare students for a lifetime of democratic engagement in a pluralistic society.

HB 2428 would deprive students of this necessary education by prohibiting postsecondary education institutions from requiring coursework that might include discussions regarding inequality, sexism, racism, and religious discrimination. Such a fundamental overhaul of the state's higher education system would:

- prevent history courses from discussing how chattel slavery, the Chinese Exclusion Act, segregation, and the fight for women's suffrage impact the world today;²
- fail to prepare future doctors, nurses, and other medical professionals to care for people of all backgrounds;³ and
- restrict or entirely eliminate universities' scientific research programs.⁴

By removing the majority of general education requirements, HB 2428 would deny entire generations of Kansas students the opportunity to gain valuable hands-on research experience and to access the classes that make our nation's higher education system exceptional. Merely stating that discussions of historical racial hatred should not be excluded from curricula will not prevent the disastrous consequences that will result from this heavy-handed censorship legislation.

The inclusion of diverse perspectives on college campuses is not an attempt to chill speech or indoctrinate. It is an evidence-based method to increase graduation rates and academic performance of all students. When professional educators have the freedom to connect curriculum with their students' lives, classroom engagement increases and dropout rates

¹ Steven Mintz, *Ged Ed: Its Past, Present, and Possible Future*, Inside Higher Ed (Apr. 2, 2023), <https://www.insidehighered.com/blogs/higher-ed-gamma/gen-ed-its-past-present-and-possible-future>.

² Johann N. Neem, *Connecting Past to Present: The History Major in Our Communities*, Am. History Ass'n (Oct. 21, 2018), <https://www.historians.org/resource/connecting-past-to-present-the-history-major-in-our-communities> (a well-rounded understanding of history, including the uncomfortable parts of American history, give students the context they need to engage with current events).

³ Timothy M. Smith, *How Legacy of Medical Racism Shapes U.S. Health Care Today*, Am. Medical Ass'n (Jan. 21, 2022) (half of medical students believe that African Americans experience pain differently than white Americans).

⁴ See, Olga R. Rodriguez, Terry Chea, & Makiya Seminera, *Trump's DEI Order Leaves Academic Researchers Fearful of Political Influence Over Grants*, AP News (Feb. 8, 2025), <https://apnews.com/article/trump-academic-research-funding-dei-5c8f89118da6c9604329120a576ba183> (bans on diversity, equity, and inclusion dramatically impact the types of research scientists conduct and eliminate funding for post-graduate students to pursue research careers).

decrease.⁵ For example, Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) achieve better educational outcomes for racial minorities and students from disadvantaged backgrounds than their counterparts because they utilize a student-first pedagogical model that emphasizes diversity, equity, and inclusion.⁶ Universities that prioritize the very programs HB 2428 would eliminate are able to recruit and retain both faculty and students at significantly higher rates, create positive learning environments that promote student involvement, and better prepare graduates for the workforce.⁷

If HB 2428 were enacted, Kansas's colleges and universities would fall behind other states' postsecondary institutions in every measurable area. The available research indicates that, under HB 2428, recruitment would become significantly more difficult, retention rates would plummet, and graduates would be at a disadvantage when entering the workforce. Although proponents of this bill will suggest it is an attempt to stop indoctrination, it is, in fact, a clear effort to impose a partisan perspective on students and monopolize the marketplace of ideas to the detriment of all Kansans. We urge you to reject government censorship and, instead, ensure students have the knowledge and resources they need to be successful members of the workforce and our democracy.

Should you have any questions regarding American Atheists' opposition to HB 2428, please contact me at vanderson@atheists.org.

Sincerely,



Victoria Anderson
State Policy Specialist
American Atheists

⁵ JT Torres, *How DEI Rollbacks at Colleges and Universities Set Back Learning*, Youth Today (Jun. 17, 2024), <https://youthtoday.org/2024/06/how-dei-rollbacks-at-colleges-and-universities-set-back-learning>.

⁶ Stacy Hawkins, *Reverse Integration: Centering HBCUs in the Fight for Educational Equality*, 24 U. of Pa. J. L. & Soc. Change 351 (2021) (typical higher education models that utilize a faculty-first pedagogical method have worse educational outcomes for non-white students, low-income students, and first-generation students because the faculty-first approach results in these students being unable to see their identities reflected amongst faculty and within class curricula).

⁷ *Responding to Attacks on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion: Considerations for Student Affairs Leaders and Institutions*, Nat'l Ass'n of Student Personnel Administrators (July 2024), <https://www.naspa.org/files/dmfile/NASPA-Response-Report.pdf>.