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HB 2510 - School districts; relating to boards of education; requiring each board of education to allocate the amount of membership association dues to individual board members.

Proponent – Oral In-Person

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Chairperson and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today. My name is Jim Howard, and I am the Superintendent of USD 335, North Jackson. I am here to offer my strong support for HB 2510.

Throughout my career in Kansas education, I, like many of my colleagues, understood there to be one predominant organization for board and superintendent support. Early on, I was advised that questioning this organization or its positions—often presented as official at KSDE and statewide meetings—could be professionally unwise.

My perspective changed at the end of my first year as superintendent, when I learned this entity was not a state agency, but a vendor funded by mandatory dues from every district in the state. In the years that followed, I heard consistent and growing concerns from board members, community patrons, and fellow superintendents. They felt underrepresented, disconnected from an organization that appeared to lobby for policies contrary to their values, and locked into a system that seemed to serve only certain schools and ideologies.

This issue reached a breaking point in 2023 when the organization actively lobbied for a bill that directly and severely harmed our district financially, despite our clear and urgent objections. For USD 335, this was the final proof that the Kansas Association of School Boards no longer represented our school, our taxpayers, our board, or our community. Consequently, at the close of the 2023-24 school year, we became the first district to end our membership.

While we stepped away without a clear path forward, we were fortunate to find a new, principled alternative: the Kansas School Board Resource Center. This organization aligns with our local values and provides the essential services we need—at no cost.

My testimony today is not an endorsement of one specific group over another. It is in support of choice, accountability, and local control. HB 2510 is a critical step toward breaking up a taxpayer-funded monopoly and empowering each locally elected board to partner with an organization that truly reflects the values of the community it serves.

I believe this bill is essential for the future of local governance in Kansas education, and I urge your favorable consideration.

I am now ready for any questions you may have.