



KANSAS NATIONAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION / 715 SW 10TH AVENUE / TOPEKA, KANSAS 66612-1686

Timothy R. Graham
Director of Government Relations & Legislative Affairs
Oral Testimony – **Oppose**
House Bill 2421
House Committee on Education
February 6, 2026

Chairperson Estes, members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in opposition to HB 2421.

Kansas NEA is a member-driven organization representing nearly 22,000 educators across the state of Kansas. Our members are organized into more than 265 local associations and work in schools and communities across nearly all 105 Kansas counties, serving students in urban, suburban, and rural districts alike.

The positions we advocate for are proposed, debated, and adopted by hundreds of educators selected by their peers to attend our annual Representative Assembly, reflecting the collective voice of education professionals of all political parties, beliefs, and backgrounds who are united by a commitment to Kansas public schools and the students they serve.

In considering HB 2421, KNEA begins with an issue that consistently guides its advocacy: local control. In most cases—and KNEA believes in this case as well—decisions that directly affect students, classrooms, and daily school operations are best made by locally elected school boards working in partnership with their communities and educators. This issue is no different.

Nevertheless, the Legislature is sending a clear signal that it intends to act in this space. For that reason, KNEA believes it is important for educators to be at the table as a resource. In offering testimony on this bill, KNEA is not stepping away from its long-standing support for local control. Rather, KNEA is engaging because these decisions will have real, day-to-day consequences in schools, and there is value in helping ensure the outcomes are thoughtful, workable, and grounded in reality.

With that context, KNEA would like to briefly share several concerns from an educator perspective.

Confidentiality

Under HB 2421, students must qualify for an exception in order to use a personal device during the school day. In practice, that can require students to disclose learning disabilities or medical needs simply to comply with the law. That puts students and educators in uncomfortable positions and raises real concerns about privacy and dignity.

Family and Caretaker Realities

Some students—particularly older students—carry real responsibilities outside of school, including caring for younger siblings or responding to family emergencies. For those students, limited access to a phone during the day is not about distraction; it is about responsibility, communication, and safety.

Enforcement and Liability

The bill places enforcement squarely on schools but does not clearly define who is responsible. In reality, this responsibility will fall on teachers and school staff, often without clear guidance, legal protection, or consistent administrative support. That creates liability concerns and increases the likelihood of uneven enforcement.

Administrative Follow-Through

Educators have lived experience with policies that appear clear on paper but become inconsistent in practice. When enforcement breaks down, responsibility often shifts back into classrooms, creating unnecessary conflict between educators, students, and families.

Definition of Instructional Time

The definition of instructional time in HB 2421 is a significant concern. This is an area where KNEA believes local control should take precedence over a one-size-fits-all approach set in statute. Defining instructional time as the entire school day, including lunch, recess, and passing periods, is far too prescriptive and does not allow districts the flexibility needed to respond to the different needs of their communities. There are already school districts across Kansas with systems in place that are popular, effective, and working, and that reality should be taken into consideration.

Additionally, the concerns outlined above—student privacy and students serving as caregivers—would be better addressed with a less rigid, one-size-fits-all ban. Allowing local districts to make those determinations would go a long way toward easing these concerns, while also honoring the principle of local control.

Unfunded Mandate

HB 2421 also represents an unfunded mandate. Districts will be required to adopt policies, train staff, develop storage solutions, enforce compliance, and report to the state, all without additional funding to support those requirements.

Implementation Timeline

Another significant concern for KNEA is the implementation timeline, with required compliance by September 1, 2026. When complex policy changes are developed and implemented on an accelerated timeline, even when the utmost caution is exercised, unintended consequences are likely to occur. In the case of HB 2421, those unintended consequences have a strong potential to fall most heavily on educators, particularly given the enforcement, liability, and administrative challenges already outlined. Additional time and flexibility would allow districts to plan more thoughtfully, engage stakeholders, and avoid preventable issues that ultimately land in classrooms.



Reason for Opposition to HB 2421

While KNEA previously testified neutral with concerns on the Senate version of this policy, HB 2421 includes an additional provision that moves us to opposition.

HB 2421 requires districts and accredited nonpublic schools to collect, report, and publicly publish data on the average amount of screen time experienced by students in kindergarten through fourth grade during a typical school day, including time spent on school-issued instructional devices. The bill further requires the State Department of Education to publish this information on its website.

KNEA believes this provision goes too far. It reduces complex instructional decisions to a single metric, invites public misinterpretation of classroom practice, and places additional reporting burdens on schools without context, resources, or demonstrated educational benefit.

For that reason, this reporting and publication requirement is the basis for KNEA's opposition to HB 2421.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify in opposition to HB 2421.