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Neutral Testimony for HB 2421
House Committee on Education
Cathy Hopkins and Beryl New, Legislative Liaisons
Kansas State Board of Education

Chair Estes and members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide neutral testimony regarding House Bill 2421 related to prohibiting the use of personal electronic devices during instructional time and prohibiting official use of social media for employees to communicate directly with students.

The State Board of Education established a Blue Ribbon Task Force on Screen Time in 2024 for the purpose of studying and making recommendations on the topic of personal device use in schools, screen time and mental health, and parental oversight of district-owned devices. The State Board compiled a task force comprised of thirty-six members with representatives from the Kansas State Board of Education, superintendents, principals, teachers, students, parents, IT staff, local school board members, and legislators. At the conclusion of the Task Force's work, the State Board received a report outlining the Task Force's recommendations. The State Board of Education voted to receive the report, but did not require each school district to adopt the recommendations of the Task Force to ensure local school boards of education maintained local control.

In addition, the State Board of Education in collaboration with the Kansas State Department of Education surveyed school districts to evaluate current cell phone policies and their implementation process. The survey results showed that many districts have adopted policies restricting the use of personal electronic devices during instructional time. Additionally, the districts that reported the greatest level of success with their cell phone use policy implementation had policies that were developed and implemented in collaboration with the school district's local community. The State Board of Education notes that a statewide approach without the ability for local school boards to tailor policies to fit their school districts, may result in less successful policy implementation.

Kansas leads the world in the success of each student.

The State Board of Education also respectfully requests that an amendment be made to HB 2421 to remove the requirement outlined in New Section 3(a)(2) to develop a report on the average time students spend on electronic devices. The State Board of Education has conducted a survey on district owned devices and will receive an update on the findings and research at the February state board meeting.

Although HB 2421 includes many of the recommendations that were brought forth by the screen time taskforce, we believe allowing districts the time to develop policies locally provides the best opportunity for meaningful change.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration of our testimony,

Cathy Hopkins and Beryl New