

February 14, 2025

## HB2160: 2025-2026 Legislative Sessions Testimony

Caedran Sullivan: English Teacher in the Shawnee Mission School District

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Chair, and members of the committee:

Nearly four years ago, I submitted a letter to my school's administration, not as a teacher but as a concerned American citizen, frustrated at the direction of the DEI meetings all staff members in the district are required to attend. My opposition to the Shawnee Mission School District's DEI curriculum is its disgraceful, race-based, radical, and politicized version of an America that revises American history.

The curriculum—still in use since 2019 and expected to be incorporated in classroom lessons—instructs staff members to view our great country through the lens of inherent racism and oppression of people of color. As a staff we are further instructed to work our way through our “white identity” to practice what most people would call racism to make up for past “racist discrimination.” Many examples from the curriculum SMSD uses can be found in the lawsuit I was compelled to file against the district in October of 2024. Here is one:

320. Defendants' DEI Curriculum inculcates with anti-white, anti-American ideology, stating: “The data of inequities in our schools are our history as a nation staring us in the face. The system of social dominance and privilege that was established by the founding fathers, and perpetuated over the centuries, is still living with us in our classrooms. Although it is a harsh reality to acknowledge, the success of wealthy white men in our country, and the marginalization of other groups, is intimately connected to the racism, sexism, genocide, and land theft that were integral to the founding of this nation.”

Because this ideology had become so entrenched in our district, my opposition letter ruffled many feathers and I have been subjected to blatant retaliation in many forms. I am still employed in the Shawnee Mission School District because I love teaching English and because I won't be bullied or forced out through a hostile work environment.

As the Supreme Court held more than fifty years ago, “It can hardly be argued that either students or teachers shed their constitutional rights to freedom of speech or expression at the schoolhouse gate.” *Tinker v. Des Moines Indep. Cmty. Sch. Dist.*, 393 U.S. 503, 506 (1969). But the Shawnee Mission School District has punished, and continues to punish, me for opposing

their racist DEI and for opposing its new “trans” policy that requires me to lie to students and parents to promote its “woke” agenda.

Our citizens deserve transparent and accountable schools. Our students and families have a right to know what goes on in the district and in the classroom. After all, funding for public school districts primarily comes from state and local tax revenue.

This bill could help people keep our school districts (and other municipalities) accountable, and help teachers who are willing to put everything on the line in order to stand up for students and families in our great state of Kansas and across this great nation. I would only ask that section (c)(1) be expanded to include discussions of municipal operations with or in the press, media, or with any interested person, would request that the statute of limitations be increased from 90 days to 1 year, and the award of costs and attorney’s fees be changed to read:

“The court shall award the costs of the action, including reasonable attorney fees and witness fees, if the prevailing party in the action is the employee.”

Otherwise, the threat of having to pay the government’s costs and attorney’s fees will be prohibitive in deciding whether to take on the municipality.

Thank you. Your consideration of these matters is appreciated.