



KANSANS FOR EXCELLENCE IN EDUCATION

Opponent Written Only Testimony on SB 48

Senate Committee on Education

Friday, February 7, 2025

By Ben Jones

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Chair Erickson, Vice-Chair Thomas, Ranking Minority Member Sykes and members of the Senate Education Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide opponent testimony on SB 48.

Kansans for Excellence in Education strongly opposes this bill. This bill sets school accreditation based only on test scores. The bill also prevents the State Board from even reviewing the English-Language Arts and Mathematics standards until 75% of Kansas students taking the state assessment score in levels 3 and 4. It also allows the State Board to alter a local districts curriculum if it is deemed that the local district's curriculum does not "reflect high academic standards."

Article 6 of the State Constitution sets clear parameters that the State Board should set school accreditation regulations as well as state educational standards. Local boards decide curriculum. This is clearly supported in Kansas Supreme Court opinions as well as several State Attorneys' General opinions. This proposal shifts school accreditation to the legislature and opens the door for the state board to dictate curriculum to local districts.

We also oppose this bill as this is a repeat of No Child Left Behind (NCLB), the federal government initiative that was law until Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) replaced it in 2015 which promoted the value of not just students on track for a 4-year traditional bachelor's degree but also valued students going into vocational and technical careers. It also shifted the sole reliance on test scores as the only metric to measure student success.

Toward the end of NCLB, we saw state after state (including Kansas) lower the cut-scores on state assessments to meet the requirements of NCLB as the goal of 100% of students scoring high on state assessments was becoming untenable and students were

no longer learning how to apply concepts learned in the classroom, but how to memorize the answers to questions for a test that determines the fate of the district they are attending. The high-stakes testing did not produce better students, just better test-takers. ESSA also allowed states to look at the student holistically by many different measures instead of just if the student tested well. Kansas then raised the bar and set high cut-scores on its state assessments and looked at graduation rates and success rates in addition to test scores to determine district success.

The language of the bill is clear. This is a return to NCLB which did not deliver on the promises it originally set out to do and it will not deliver this time. We urge you to not pass this piece of legislation.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on SB 48.