

Opponent Testimony for SB 76
For the Senate Education Committee
February 10th, 2025
Symon Keener

Chair Erickson and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide opponent testimony on SB 76.

I am Symon Keener, a concerned, nineteen-year-old transgender resident of Wichita. I am testifying about the negative, maladaptive effects SB 76 would have on the young people of our community.

In high school, I struggled with bullying, not at the hands of my peers but my teachers. When I began my freshman year, choir was a big passion of mine, so joining the high school choir was a no-brainer. For two weeks, my choir teacher repeatedly deadnamed me in front of the class to purposefully humiliate me, degraded me for crying when he induced panic attacks, and strictly told his higher-ups he refused to refer to me as "Symon." No one above him offered me help, even when I begged repeatedly. I became avoidant of school and failed every class until eventually, I switched to online school to escape it. I lost out on four years of socialization and face-to-face education because of the ideals this bill attempts to push on our citizens.

I wish to return to school to further my education and acquire the skills needed to help those who have struggled under this same system. If I cannot get my degree here with my friends and family by my side, I will simply go elsewhere and return to Kansas once I am done. Minors do not have this luxury. If SB 76 passes, you will see a jump in drop-out rates, suicide rates, and depression rates amongst your youth. If you care about the youth and the education of those setting examples for them, you will not allow this bill to pass.

Children and adults alike deserve safe spaces, whether they are trans or not. Schools have never been a safe space for transgender people. I and every other trans person in Kansas can assure you that being bullied by adults doesn't make us any different concerning our gender. It only makes a difference in how safely we perceive the world. Transgender people are people. Our identities and genders are not political, just as yours aren't. We simply wish to keep our heads down and lead peaceful lives surrounded by the people who love and support us. Please do not take that away.

Chair Erickson and members of the Committee, thank you for allowing me to write to you. Your consideration of these matters is very much appreciated.