

Opponent Testimony of SB 76  
For the Senate Education Committee  
February 7, 2025  
Elizabeth Staley  
Private Citizen

I oppose SB 76.

My name is Elizabeth Staley, but if you've ever heard someone mention me, that's not the name they used. My name, Elizabeth Staley, has been the same on my birth certificate and all of my "official" documents throughout my 46 years. I don't really feel like an "Elizabeth" though. Personally and professionally, including throughout my career, Lissa is my name to everyone. My mom even wrote the nickname on the announcement she mailed friends and family at my birth, back in 1978. And because it isn't the name on my birth certificate, I've spent my whole life asking people to please call me by the name that everyone else calls me, the name I want to be called, the name that is me. I always dreaded the first days of school in high school and college, knowing that I'd have to decide if it was "worth the trouble" to make the request with each new teacher. When people call me "Elizabeth" – even today – it's a sign that they don't really know me or care about me.

I believe children, along with children and their friends, children and their families, use other names than the ones on their birth certificates frequently. I'm concerned about how Section 1(b)(2) of SB76 "name other than the name listed on the minor's or student's birth certificate, or a derivative of such name, without the written permission of the minor's or student's parent." will be determined and by whom. I did a quick internet search for common nicknames for the name Elizabeth – ([https://www.momjunction.com/articles/short-names-nicknames-for-elizabeth-with-meanings\\_00747237/](https://www.momjunction.com/articles/short-names-nicknames-for-elizabeth-with-meanings_00747237/)) and even on **"85 Unusual Short Names Or Nicknames For Elizabeth"** my own name, Lissa, a derivative of Elizabeth – chosen by my mother, named after one of her cousins with the same nickname – does not appear.

I oppose this bill because I also strongly believe that asking a person what name and pronouns they use, and using that name and those pronouns, is crucial to supporting, encouraging and creating a safe learning and living environment for people. My teenage child let me know last year that they are nonbinary and asked me to refer to them using "they/them" pronouns. I try very hard to do so. Honestly, I don't get it right every time and I correct myself a lot. But nothing is more important to me than my children and making sure that they know I want to acknowledge, support and celebrate them.

A wise colleague taught me that the golden rule has been replaced by the platinum rule – "Treat others as they wish to be treated" and I fear greatly that this bill will cause harm to Kansas students by not allowing them to communicate how they wish to be treated, and causing them to feel, as I do whenever someone calls me "Elizabeth" that the people around them don't really know them or care about them.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth (Lissa) Staley

Topeka, KS