

Oral/Written Opponent Testimony of SB-76

For the Senate Education Committee

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Gabriel Padilla, Private Citizen

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Chair Erickson and Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide opponent testimony of Senate Bill 83

My name is Gabriel Padilla, my pronouns are he/el. As a transgender man, I know how crucial it is to be called by your preferred name and pronouns. In high school, I went by a different name, and my teachers respected that decision, which gave me the space to be myself. This support played a key role in shaping the educator I am today. Just like anyone named William can go by Will or Bill without question, students deserve to be called the name they choose, regardless of their gender identity.

Research from the *Journal of Adolescent Health* underscores this importance—students who can use their chosen name in all aspects of their lives experience 71% fewer symptoms of severe depression, a 34% decrease in thoughts of suicide, and a 65% decrease in suicide attempts. These numbers are not just statistics; they represent the real impact on students' mental health and well-being.

As a high school math teacher in Wichita, I see firsthand how important it is to create a safe and supportive environment for all students. My job is to protect and treat students the way I would want to be treated—respectfully and with understanding. In Maslow's hierarchy of needs, safety is second only to physiological needs, and if we continue to take away educators' ability to create safe spaces, we put our students' well-being at risk. Every student deserves a classroom where they feel seen, valued, and supported, and that's what I strive to provide every day.

Please vote no to this bill as you are restricting the educators all over Kansas.