

Opponent Oral Testimony of SB76
For the Senate Education Committee
February 10, 2025
Wren Porcaro

Chair Erickson and Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in opposition of Senate Bill 76. I am Wren Porcaro from Kansas Senate District 31.

I'll be straight to the point: I simply cannot understand what purpose this bill serves besides being discriminatory towards transgender and gender non-conforming students.

Firstly, what possible harm lies in calling someone a different name—or different pronouns—that leaves legislators so scared? Here's my two cents: there is none. The only reason I could see for this bill's introduction is a wish to limit people's free speech and free expression. It is a wish that contradicts the very beginning of the bill's text which affirms the importance of free speech. It is a wish that even contradicts the principle of America as a free nation.

Now, I know that some students may try to get teachers to call them silly nicknames, and to my understanding this bill would prevent that (without parents' permission, at least), but we both know that's not the purpose of this bill. In my opinion this bill is clearly designed to target an extremely small portion of students and deny them the dignity they deserve. When I say small, I mean small. 2022 data from the Williams Institute at the UCLA School of Law estimates there are approximately 2,100 individuals 13-17 identifying as transgender in Kansas. When compared to the 2024 Census Bureau estimates of Kansas population under 18, very roughly 700,000 people, it becomes clear how inane it is to waste time trying to introduce a bill to prevent somewhere around 0.3 percent of our state's student population from being called the name they want. That's 0.3 percent. In a group of 100 people, that's not even one person.

Besides, this bill doesn't even consider legal name change orders by district courts as defined in K.S.A. 60-1401 and 60-1402, meaning that students who cannot get their birth certificate changed or amended (sometimes due to strict requirements in some other states or due to cost issues) can still be called an incorrect name by school officials and students without any potential repercussions, even if the student has a legal name change order.

Finally, I don't understand why this bill even mentions postsecondary educational institutions—not only do the provisions of the bill only apply to minors, but it would simply

be odd for a public university or other postsecondary educational institution to limit the free speech of students and educators, potentially preventing them from using the name and pronouns that they wish to use. That is simply a limitation that goes against legal precedent affirming students' First Amendment rights and right to free expression at public universities.

This bill simply has no purpose but to aid and abet in the harassment of young and vulnerable transgender students. It is unnecessary, it is harmful, and it is discriminatory. It allows students to harass their peers by calling them the wrong name. It allows, and even in some cases requires, teachers to harass their students by calling them the wrong name.

Using someone's preferred name and pronouns is not a matter of ideology, it is a matter of dignity and respect. I would not call Chair Erickson or any other Member of the Committee by their first name, or by a title such as "Mr." if they use "Ms."/"Mrs." (or vice versa). I see no difference between this and people choosing a name that they wish to use. Calling me by my legal name would simply be wrong, because no one knows me by my legal name. They know me as Wren because that's how I introduce myself and ask people to refer to me, and people respect that. To support this bill shows to me that you don't respect transgender students and that you don't respect me.

I urge you to consider the harm that this bill causes, in exchange for... what exactly? I believe the harm that this bill causes vastly overshadows any potential for harm that its absence could cause, for what exactly is the harm in calling someone the name that they use? It's clear to me: there is none, at least other than some vague fear of "pronouns" and "gender identity" by some members of this Committee or their party.

I thank Chair Erickson and the Members of the Committee again for this opportunity to provide testimony against Senate Bill 76. I urge you to oppose this harmful bill.

Thank you.

Wren Porcaro

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