

Opponent Testimony of SB 76
For the Senate Education Committee
February 10, 2025
Kivrin Staley
Private Citizen

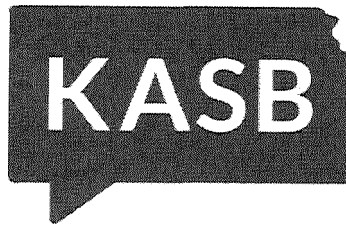
My name is Kivrin Staley and I am a concerned high school student. I am testifying on how SB 76 will harm students in the education system across Kansas, preventing learning opportunities and growth in the classroom. I have a fairly unique name that is not entered in many baby name websites. In Section 1.2 it states, "or a derivative of such name." How will you decide what counts as a nickname? There are not any lists of nicknames for 'Kivrin'. However, for the first two years of high school, I went by the nickname, 'Rin.' Under this bill, I don't believe I would be able to use the name 'Rin.' Names are becoming more unique and unconventional in the 21st century. Nicknames are not clear-cut and cannot be specified for every single name.

I am terrified for Transgender and Gender Non-Conforming youth in Kansas. I am nonbinary. I chose to keep the name I was given at birth because I felt it still represented the person I was. However, for many of my friends and family, their birth name does not. Although it seems like a simple thing, the use of a chosen name is vital to the mental health of students. According to a scientific article I read, "Depressive symptoms, suicidal ideation, and suicidal behavior were at the lowest levels when chosen names could be used..."*. I am so scared for my friends and the effect this bill will have on their health if it passes. For the sake of all youth in Kansas, their mental health, and individuality, please stop this bill.

Thank you for your consideration,

Kivrin Staley

*<https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC6165713/#:~:text=An%20increase%20by%20one%20context,56%25%20decrease%20in%20suicidal%20behavior>. (Chosen Name Use is Linked to Reduced Depressive Symptoms, Suicidal Ideation, and Behavior among Transgender Youth)



Written Opposition Testimony of SB 76

For Senate Education Committee

February 10, 2025

By Angela Stallbaumer

Deputy Director/General Counsel

Kansas Association of School Boards

Chair Erickson and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on SB 76. I wish I could present this testimony in person today, but I am conducting a teacher inservice during the hearing.

Please note that in presenting this testimony we are representing the interests of our member boards, which include the boards of most Kansas public school districts and many of the state's community and tech colleges. KASB's member-adopted permanent policies provide that "[a]s the constitutional authority charged with the management of local schools, the school board is accountable to district patrons through the electoral process and must be the final authority on local management decisions".

Similarly, our 2025 Resolution on State Issues, as approved by our membership last November, supports the following priorities relevant to this discussion.

- We support the development of relationships among local teachers, students and families without additional, restrictive legislative oversight resulting in the diversion of time and money from the classroom to bureaucratic tasks.
- We support management of public schools under locally elected boards of education.
- We support improving teacher recruitment and retention through local control of classroom content and respect for the teaching profession.
- We support legislative action that will improve student health and well-being, including increasing support for the mental health needs of students and staff.
- We support local boards' constitutional governing authority and generally oppose mandates that create clear conflicts between state and federal requirements and laws. Such conflicting mandates have negative, unintended consequences for public schools, including causing districts to divert resources from their core mission of educating students.

Please note that, while we appear in opposition to this bill, we are not opposed to the whole of its contents. Although Section 1(b) of this bill goes a step further than is presently required by law in having parents of minor students consent in writing to changes in the student's name, pronouns, or titles, our members have long supported the ability of parents to make educational decisions for their minor children, and they strive to work in partnership with parents in this regard. Furthermore, Kansas law, specifically K.S.A. 38-141, codifies parent rights to educational decision-making for their children and already provides an opportunity for parents who believe their rights have been tread upon to challenge those actions in court. K.S.A. 38-141, provides, in part, as follows.

(b) It shall be the public policy of this state that parents shall retain the fundamental right to exercise primary control over the care and upbringing of their children in their charge. It is further the public policy of this state that children shall have the right to protection from abuse and neglect...

(d) Any parent may maintain a cause of action in state court or in any court of competent jurisdiction for claims arising under the principles established in subsection (b). Any person authorized by law to act on behalf of a child may maintain a cause of action in the name of such child in any court of competent jurisdiction for claims arising under the principles established in subsection (b).

Thus, although we do not oppose Section 1(b) of this bill as a concept, we believe state law already outlines parent rights to educational decision-making, making it redundant and superfluous to address it again through this legislation.

With this said, we are appearing in opposition to this bill based on concerns with language in Section 1(c) through (e). First, these sections presuppose that a parent would not consent to a change in name, title, and pronoun of a student, when this is often not the case. Under Section 1(c), if a parent has already provided written consent to the school to call the student by a name or pronoun which is not in alignment with the child's birth certificate or biological sex, and a staff member refuses to abide by parent directives in this regard, this section would not allow the school's administration or board to deal with this staff member in a disciplinary context. So, by following the law not to discipline a staff member for acting in defiance of a parent directive, we would expose the district to liability under K.S.A. 38-141, as previously described, Section 1(e) of the bill, the Kansas Act Against Discrimination, and federal law, including, but not necessarily limited to, Title IX and the 14th Amendment of the U.S. Constitution.

Similarly, Section 1(d) would not allow a school district to discipline a student if another student's parent has directed the school to refer to the child by a different name, title, and/or pronoun, and the student elects to bully or harass the other student by not respecting those wishes. Again, our schools would then be in a position, where following this state law would have our members in jeopardy of violating K.S.A. 38-141 and possibly other state and federal laws requiring our members to prohibit bullying and harassment and stop its occurrence, if it does happen.

In sum, the bill, as written, is incongruous in several areas, and this creates exposure for legal challenges for school entities, their boards, and their staff members.

While the 2024 Title IX Regulations, which involved discrimination on the basis of sex in programs and activities receiving federal funds, did not become effective in Kansas and are presently not in effect in other states of the United States, there is significant caselaw, including some U.S. Supreme Court cases interpreting discrimination on the basis of sex to include discrimination on the basis of one's gender identity. So, short of an act of Congress definitively defining "sex" for the purposes of Title IX, educational entities failing to accommodate parent directives on this matter regarding their minor children are at risk of legal challenge and loss in a court of law on this issue.

Please also note that it is possible for an individual to have one's birth certificate changed to reflect a name and sex other than the name and sex assigned at birth. This can generally be accomplished with the parent's permission for minor students in a courtroom process. So, there is the possibility that an individual's birth certificate and name and sex assigned at birth would be out of alignment, further complicating the compliance side of this bill.

Yet another unintended consequence of this legislation is that it would create a cause of action to be used against our members even if a student is universally called a nickname in school that has nothing to do with a student's gender-identity. If a male student with the same name as his father is consistently called "Junior" by family and friends, for example, that name would not be consistent with his name on the birth certificate or a derivative thereof. In this case, a staff member using a nickname the child is comfortable with in the school setting would subject the staff member and the school to legal liability.

In closing, we ask the committee to trust our members to work closely with their parent partners to educate minor students at school, and we urge the committee not to pass this bill out of committee for the aforementioned reasons. Thank you for your time and consideration on this matter.

KASB is a non-profit service organization built on an abiding belief in Kansas public schools. We have put the needs of students and K-12 leaders first since 1917.

MOLLY STARR
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PRIVATE CITIZEN
2/7/2025

OPPONENT

Dear Chairman Erickson and Members of the Education Committee,

Thank you for taking time to read and listen to the community's feelings about how SB 76 would affect them. My name is Molly Starr, and live in Douglas County. I encourage you all to vote NO on SB 76 tomorrow, and if it is further passed down the line as even the proposal of such a law does lasting harm to students, teachers and staff, as well as families.

Gender identity is not always an easy topic to understand, and sometimes we may need to unlearn some old ideas so we can really get what gender is all about. Many of us were taught that there are only two genders (man/masculine & woman/feminine) and two sexes (male & female). However, there is a lot more to it than that.

Some may think using they/them pronouns to refer to an individual is grammatically incorrect — but it actually isn't. In fact, we use they/them all the time in, for example, if you found someone's wallet on the ground, you probably would not say, "Someone lost his or her wallet!" You would be much more likely to say, "I need to find the person who lost their wallet."

Teachers are under enough pressure as it is to make trusting relationships with students. Often if a student is in an unsafe environment at home, a teacher may be their most trusted adult. Damaging this relationship between students and teachers by making teachers fearful of being sued does not provide a suitable or stable situation where trust can grow.

Students who need help with changing their pronouns or coming out often need the support of their community. The support of their school community almost always comes before there is time to get a birth certificate changed, which in some cases may be difficult or impossible to due, depending on family circumstances.

Making sure students are called the name that they choose can save lives. This law seems to intend to force people to transition only by their birth certificate; however, gender identity is a person's experience of their own gender; a person's innermost concept of self as masculine, feminine, a blend of both, another gender(s), or none. This is not always congruent with biological sex or gender assigned at birth. This law will make living and going to school for students and allies of students going through a transition much harder, when they are already going something difficult.

The main takeaway: respecting pronouns should be easy. It's a simple way to show we care about the people in our lives. It's not about creating laws about forcing misgendering, as SB 76 intends to do, while creating fear; it's about unconditionally respecting a person's identity.

As representatives of Kansas, you know that using the correct pronouns is a simple way to say to your constituents "I see you. I care about you. You deserve to be affirmed always."

Thank you for taking time to hear about importance of pronouns and the student/teacher relationship. Once again, I encourage to vote NO on the passage of SB 76. Thank you.

Flora Steadman
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Private Citizen
2/7/2025

Opponent

Chairman Erickson and Members of the Committee, thank you so much for giving me the time to share my thoughts on SB 76 with you today. My name is Flora Steadman and I am a voter of Decatur County In Oberlin KS I am writing to you today to encourage the committee to vote no on SB 76

I believe that you should vote no because all kids should be shown just as much respect for them as we demand from them. What is in their pants and who they want to be called is no one else's business but their own and there for we shouldn't make them uncomfortable with who they are. Instead we should try and learn about it and show them respect. There is a student here in this school who is already going threw a tough time being different, and establishing this bill will make their life even harder. They should be able to express themselves and be respected just like every other straight cis kid in the school. I don't think just because they don't identify with the gender they were born with doesn't mean we cant show them kindness and respect. They are people who want to be accepted and respected just like me and you.

Once again i thank you all for hearing my story and thoughts on this bill and I encourage you all to please vote no for passage of SB 76. Thank you.

Emily Steinwart
emilytsteinwart@gmail.com
Private Citizen
2/10/2025

Opponent

Chairman Erickson and Members of the Committee, thank you so much for giving me time to share my thoughts on SB 76 with you today. My name is Emily Steinwart and I am a voter in Overland Park. I am writing today to encourage the committee to vote NO on SB 76.

This bill is pointless and cruel. There is no medical, scientific or ethical justification for pursuing this legislation. It will only serve to harm our most vulnerable HUMAN BEINGS. Trans and binary people are PEOPLE and this is not up for debate. Courts across the country have found that refusing to use someone's gender-affirming name and pronouns can constitute gender-based harassment in violation of the Equal Protection Clause.

If a kid can use a nickname or decide to go by their (oh look a neutral pronoun) middle name, then a kid can choose/use their preferred gender and name. There is no difference and the hypocrisy is stunning. I beg of you to focus on issues that actually matter to Kansans and stop this culture war idiocy.

Once again, I thank you all for hearing my story and thoughts on this bill, and I encourage you all to vote no of the passage of SB 76. Thank you.

Cade Stevens

Written-only OPPOSITION testimony

SB 76

Members of the Kansas Education Committee:

This is my first time writing a testimony, so please excuse any mistakes I make, and I am not sure if it is possible, but if this testimony is made public I would like anonymity of both my preferred, and legal name. For the past three years I have been going by the name Clover with they/them pronouns, I am in 10th grade, and I am writing in OPPOSITION of Senate Bill 76.

I remember a year after I started to identify with they/them pronouns, there was a kid at my school who refused to call me by my preferred pronouns. Day after day I would hear Cade and he/him leave the kids mouth, and eventually it all got to me, I decided I would kill myself. I planned to position myself for my dead body to fall into a river with my pocket knife to my neck in hopes that it will cause a hopefully quick death. I thank the gods everyday that someone who was at my school found me in the middle of preparing my suicide attempt.

It took one year for me to make the decision to kill myself, and from only one person. You can imagine what teachers, adults in positions of authority and power, repeatedly using someone's name of birth would do to someone already insecure about themselves. If you doubt that something so insignificant as a name would bring a human to the point of suicide, then look at the studies. The Suicide Prevention Resource Center has stated that, in a study "Participants who were able to use their chosen names at school, home, work, and with friends had lower reported depression symptoms, suicidal thoughts, and suicide attempts compared to peers who could not use their

chosen names in any context” (Suicide Prevention Resource Center, Using Chosen Names Reduces Odds of Depression and Suicide in Transgender Youths, April 20, 2018).

SB 76 does have a work around through the use of unnecessary paperwork to give a teacher the permission to use their freedom of speech, but this requires permission from the parent, and what if that parent is unwilling? And what if the parent didn't know about their kid's identity? This bill will put closeted children into a dangerous household as their parents, if Anti-LGBTQIA, may lash out in a child's own home. I know from experience that the feeling of being alone, and against the world is where suicidal thoughts come from. What happens when kids cut their forearms? What happens when kids are hanging from their fans? What happens when we see America's youth lying on the ground neck sliced open by their own hand?

This bill will cause no good, only wasted paper for the paperwork, and the death of countless teenagers out of fear of what will happen at home and school, the places we should feel safe, not targeted.

Opponent Testimony of SB 76
For the Senate Education Committee
February 10, 2025
Jay Sweeney
Private Citizen

My name is Jay Sweeney and I am a concerned Kansas resident. I am testifying on how SB 76 would allow opportunities for abuse against children who would like to use a chosen name. SB 76 is also a waste of my taxpayer dollars, school funding, and the time of the Senate Education Committee.

The enforcement of SB 76 would mean that children who use a "chosen name" would be singled out, bullied, and possibly put in danger by "transphobic" parents. I can get behind the call to "protect our children," but this bill goes directly against that by placing vulnerable children in harm's way and affecting their mental health. Faculty would also be put in the predicament of either choosing to protect their students or face legal consequences. SB 76 would be a violation to the rights to free speech of school faculty, parents, minor children, and adult students. SB 76 would be a waste of school funding, and will not improve the lives of anybody. If passed, enforcing SB 76 will be almost impossible and an even more frivolous waste of time and money.

This bill is a bad faith attempt to control students and school faculty even down to the words they say. I do not condone its passing in the state where I pay taxes, and where we have some of the best public schools in the country - schools that I went to and graduated from. I cannot see how controlling what name people use in school will improve the education or well-being of students.

I hope the State Education Committee will consider my testimony and those of other concerned residents. Thank you for reading my testimony, and I appreciate your consideration of this matter.

Zora Stewart-Jones
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Private citizen
2/10/2025

Opponent

Chairman Erickson and Members of the Committee, thank you so much for giving me time to share my thoughts on SB 76 with you today. My name is Zora Stewart-Jones. I am a voter from Mission Kansas. I am writing today to encourage the committee to vote NO on SB 76.

I think legislation such as this are dangerous. Research- like the "minority stress model"- show discriminatory legislation and community alienation are a key part in the high rates of queer substance abuse rates, suicide rates, and high rates of homelessness. This bill is an act of discrimination that is linked to deeply harmed against my community.

We can do better and we should do better. Trans people are a tiny percentage of the population but are treated so poorly. Do better. You are putting minorities in danger under false pretenses. Do better.

Elaine Swan
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PRIVATE CITIZEN
2/5/2025

OPPONENT

Chairman Erickson and Members of the Committee, thank you so much for giving me time to share my thoughts on SB 76 with you today. My name is Elaine Swan and I am a voter in Sedgwick county Wichita. I am writing today to encourage the committee to vote NO on SB 76

This bill will absolutely do more harm than good if passed, and will absolutely skyrocket the number of minor suicides and deaths because of bullying and self harm. This issue is close to my heart as I have a little sister and her friends who are strong advocates in their school against bullying because of someone's identity. She sees firsthand on the daily people harming themselves because of harassment. And I myself use a different name than my first name and it isn't because my identity has changed at all, just because I prefer my middle name and yet schools and hospitals and most people in my life do not respect this change until I legally change it and it finally caught on socially. The confidence it gives me to be able to use my preferred name is everything.

Once again, I thank you all for hearing my story and thoughts on this bill, and I encourage you all to vote no of the passage of SB 76. Thank you.

Ronald Szymankowski
ronaldszymankowski@gmail.com
KANSAS CITIZEN
2/6/2025

OPPONENT

Chairman Erickson and Members of the Committee, my name is Ronald Szymankowski and I am a voter in Overland Park, Kansas. Thank you for the opportunity to share my thoughts on SB 76. I am writing today to encourage the committee to vote NO on SB 76.

There is no effective means of ensuring every school employee and student has the knowledge of every student's name and sex listed on their birth certificate, nor should there be. In my opinion this bill has the potential for setting up a police state atmosphere.

Even if an education professional wanted to follow this law perfectly, it would be nearly impossible for them to protect themselves from the risk of litigation.

Politicians should stop this invasion into classrooms and schools and into the lives of students and families they don't know. This kind of legislation would interfere with the ability of educators to do their jobs and create healthy learning environments.

Thank you for hearing my thoughts on this bill, and I encourage you all to vote NO on the passage of SB 76. Thank you.

Opponent of SB 76
For the Senate Education Committee
February 10, 2025
Marie Taylor
Private Citizen

Chair Erickson and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for taking time to read through my testimony. I am a resident of Lawrence, Kansas, and I urge you to vote no on the passage of SB 76.

I am an early childhood professional, carrying three professional early childhood degrees from the University of Kansas. I understand the power of early childhood education as this is the time for the most brain development in all of life, from birth to 5 years old. Part of this development is identity. Young children begin to learn who they are, what excites them, how they learn and what their identity is before they are 5 years old. Learning about themselves includes understanding their gender identity. It is the responsibility of each teacher in our state to walk alongside each of their students and encourage them to be their authentic selves. This includes showing respect by calling each student by their preferred name.

There is power in each of our names because it's who we are. It is the word that sums up my personality, my learning style, my likes and dislikes, it makes me...me. Please consider letting each child in our education system in Kansas get to have this power.

Teachers have an extremely difficult job. Many have 20-30 students in their classroom and are expected to ensure that each of these individual students receives a high quality education, meaning that by the end of the year, each student has had a year of growth in their education. Before this teaching can begin, students need to feel seen, heard, and cared about by their teacher. For a teacher to create a high quality education environment for each student, which will create productive citizens in Kansas, they **must** be able to reach each student and connect with them. Knowing how each child prefers to be called is an important part of connection. This bill is asking teachers to only see parts of each student and deny students from their names that mean so much to them as their names are *who* they are. So, please oppose SB 76 and protect young Kansans from discrimination.

Thank you for taking the time to read my testimony, and please vote no on SB 76.

Marie Taylor

Martha Terhaar
marthaterhaar@gmail.com
Private Citizen
2/10/2025

Opponent

Chairwoman Erickson and Members of the Committee, thank you for giving me the opportunity to share my thoughts on SB 76 with you today. My name is Martha Terhaar and I am a voter in Holcomb, Kansas. I am writing today to encourage the committee to vote NO on SB 76.

I oppose this bill because it does nothing to benefit our schools, our teachers, or our future generations. Parents, teachers, and students themselves know what they need and both data and narrative show they need increased access to food, behavioral supports, and increased capacity of staff. This bill addresses none of those - so if it isn't coming from the voices of majority of Kansans, then what is the point except to isolate and harm and already vulnerable population of students.

Here's a classroom example. A teacher is taking roll call of a 5th grade class the first day of school and says "Robert Smith". Little Robert raises his hand and says, "actually most people call me Bobby". Bobby isn't what's written on his birth certificate - so what then?

This is not what Kansans are demanding from you, our representatives. We are demanding increased access to healthcare, consistent funding for our public school system, sustainable housing, lower price of utilities, or just for the price of a dozen eggs to cost less. This bill addresses no needs of Kansans. It simply promotes the needs of a political agenda. Kansas is historically a state that succeeds BECAUSE we prioritize the needs of our neighbors over the needs of a national political agenda.

So be a true Kansan. Care for your neighbors with compassion and listen to our actual needs by voting NO on SB 76. Thank you for your time.

Bryan Thompson
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Private Citizen
2/7/2025

Opponent

Chairman Erickson and Members of the Committee, thank you for allowing me to share my thoughts on SB 76. My name is Bryan Thompson, and I am a voter in Saline County/Salina. I encourage the committee to vote NO on SB 76"

I know your intent is to do what is best for Kansas children. I don't think this bill will accomplish that goal. Requiring people to be addressed only as identified on their birth certificate would mean that "William" could not be called "Bill", etc. Let's allow kids to be who they are. They need compassion, not judgment.

Again, thank you for allowing me to have input on this bill. Please vote no on SB 76.

Cynthia Thompson
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Private Citizen
2/6/2025

Opponent

Thank you Chairman Erickson and Committee Members. I'm Cindy Thompson, I am a consistent voter in Salina. I am writing to encourage you to vote NO on SB 76.

Trans kids face so many challenges, we shouldn't give them more problems. Calling people by their chosen name is an easy way to show respect. Other kids will notice if a trans kid is not respected.

Thanks for reading, and I hope you vote to respect all kids.

TIMERI THOMPSON
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PRIVATE CITIZEN
2/10/2025

OPPONENT

I would like to thank Chairman Erickson and all Members of the Committee for allowing me to express my thoughts on the matter of SB 76. My name is Timeri Thompson and I am a voter in Sedgwick County/Cheney. I am writing today to encourage the committee to vote NO on SB 76.

My reasons for opposing this bill include, but are not limited to the mental wellbeing of children who would otherwise be at risk of suicide and self harm if not adequately allowed to express themselves, the bodily autonomy of individuals of all ages, and the potential high risk of bullying that would result from hateful and exclusionary legislature. As someone with a close family member who is non-binary, it has been made clear to me that individuals with gender dysphoria are in no way our enemies, but people who require love, safety, support, and respect; just like all human beings. Refusing to respect a person's preferred pronouns poses immense danger to their safety, and is especially heinous when that person is a child. I would like to think this Committee is intent on the SAFETY of all children, rather than the danger.

Thank you again for hearing my thoughts on this matter and I strongly encourage you all to vote no on the passage of SB 76. Thank you.

Natalie Tos-Brightup
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PRIVATE CITIZEN
2/10/2025

OPPONENT

Chairman Erickson and Members of the Committee, thank you so much for giving me time to share my thoughts on SB 76 with you today. My name is Natalie Tos-Brightup and I am a voter in Sedgwick County/Wichita. I am writing today to encourage the committee to vote NO on SB 76

Our youth are the future of our community. Their strength and resilience is what brings hope to me that we can all see the human in each other. Every Kansas student has the right to be seen for how they want to be seen, including gender-affirming name and pronouns. Allowing our young people to find themselves as they grow is what makes them into the leaders for the generations to come.

This law puts each of our youth at risk. Not acknowledging someone's thoughts, feelings, and beliefs is abusive. We do not all have to agree with what one another believes but we can respect it and treat others how they want to be treated not how we want to be treated. Each person is different and is not meant to fit a mold that someone else has defined for them.

Providing space for our youth to challenge and grow is more important now than ever. The world is changing fast and adapting to these changes is most important to the future of our state, country, and world. When teachers and staff choose to not support a youth, it shuts down learning. Educators can grow with our youth.

I cannot imagine what life would have been like in 2015 when my daughter was transitioning if we weren't supported, specifically by you, Ms. Erickson. I now understand that this might not have been by your choice, but knowing you had her back at school gave us reassurance. When her brother died by suicide in 2016, we never thought twice about knowing you were available to us. This time in our life made us more vulnerable than we could have known and never once did you treat us different than your other students. You guided us along the path we were unfamiliar with in what seemed to be a caring way.

Allowing educators of our next generation to support our youth is the right thing to do. Our youth deserve respect and support and the space to come in to their own. Let them grow into the leaders and guides of our future. Treat them as humans.

Once again, I thank you all for hearing my story and thoughts on this bill. I encourage you all to vote noon the passage of SB 76. Thank you.

Bailey Tredway
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PRIVATE CITIZEN
2/10/2025

OPPONENT

Members of the Committee and Chairman Erickson, thank you for giving me time to share my thoughts on SB 76 with you today. My name is Bailey Tredway and I am a voter in Douglas County, I am writing to encourage the committee to vote NO on SB 76.

Let me first ask, who does this affect? Members of the committee, does this affect you? Will you go home and your relationships, your income, your children be affected by some college student asking to be called a different name? At a college you don't go to, professors you don't know? I will assume no. As a nonbinary citizen, this inclusivity has made me feel more safe and included. My professors and peers make me feel seen and trusted, which makes me better in all subjects. Why do you care when the only people this impacts are professors (who are ALWAYS more than willing, not because of school policy but because they CARE) and the students who only want to be seen. This is such an infringement on the First Amendment as well. Passing this will hurt so many kids and even professors. Let people live their lives.

Once again, I thank you for hearing my story and thoughts on SB 76, and I encourage you all to vote no on SB 76. Thank you.

B. Trickey
bdtrickey3@gmail.com
PRIVATE CITIZEN
2/10/2025

OPPONENT

Chairman Erickson and Members of the Committee, thank you so much for giving me time to share my thoughts on SB 76 with you today. My name is B. Trickey and I am a voter in Lawrence, KS. I am writing today to encourage the committee to vote NO on SB 76.

I believe this bill is an overreach of government influence that limits the freedoms of Kansans to express themselves freely and distracts from the real needs and issues Kansans care about. In a statewide survey published in March 2024, Kansans communicated their concerns about affordable access to health care, housing, child care, and healthy food. A significant amount of survey participants also communicated that they believed their elected officials were not in touch with the financial burdens Kansas families face. As a trans woman, I know the value of being able to talk about and acknowledge my identity in an educational setting, but I don't think you need to share my identity to understand why this bill should not be passed. I know there are plenty of Kansans who do not understand my identity, but I also believe — despite our differences — we hold the common value of doing everything can to care for the ones we love. Many Kansans like me are looking to our local and state governments for support for ourselves, our friends, and our families — not restrictions on our rights to choose how we live our lives and what we are allowed to discuss. I hope that you take this perspective into consideration before you vote to revoke the personal freedoms of Kansans.

Once again, I thank you all for hearing my thoughts on this bill, and I encourage you all to vote no of the passage of SB 76. Thank you.

Mackenzi Truelove
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Private Citizen
2/7/2025

Opponent

Thank you for hearing my concerns with S.B. 76. My name is Mackenzi Truelove and I am a voter in Sedgwick County, Wichita. I'm writing to encourage the committee to vote NO on S.B. 76.

This is an attack on free speech. It impacts all children, not just those that identify differently than the markers on their birth certificate and stifles educators from focusing on what matters—creating a safe learning environment—by forcing them to go against what makes their students comfortable. Allowing educators to be attacked will create distrust amongst them and an environment of fear within the school system. Teachers couldn't even use a nickname without someone being able to bring lawful action against them if this bill were passed. Liberty must be maintained for educators to feel safe doing their job. The fear this bill would create, if passed, is another classroom distraction that should be avoided by voting no on S.B. 76.

I am asking that you protect teachers, who already have so few protections as it is.

Do not criminalize or reprimand our educators for respecting students' wishes. Maintain liberty in this great state by voting no on S.B. 76. Thanks for your time hearing my thoughts.

Stacie Unruh
joshunruh001@yahoo.com
PRIVATE CITIZEN
2/10/2025

OPPONENT

Chairman Erickson and members of the committee thank you so much for giving me time to share my thoughts on SB 76 with you today. My name is Stacie Unruh and I am a voter in Reno county Hutchinson. I'm writing to encourage the committee to vote no on SB 76.

I oppose the bill and think legislators should vote against it.

Thank you for your time once again. I think you all for hearing my opinion and thoughts on the bill and I encourage you to vote no the passage of SB 76 thank you.

Keaton Vaughn
keatonmvaughn@gmail.com
Private Citizen
2/10/2025

Opponent

Chairman Erickson and Members of the Committee, thank you so much for giving me time to share my thoughts on SB 76 with you today. My name is Keaton Vaughn and I am a voter in Johnson County, KS. I am writing today to encourage the committee to vote NO on SB 76.

Schools should be a place where all students feel comfortable to learn and be themselves. Addressing students by the correct name and pronouns creates a safe environment, validates students identities, and promotes mental wellbeing. Actively misgendering students will lead to trauma and open the door to bullying by other students.

I am transgender and know firsthand how important this is. It is painful and hurtful to me when people use the wrong name and pronouns, and it make me feel unsafe and uncomfortable. I changed my name when I was getting my MBA at Pittsburg State University, and it was an affirming and easy process to update it with the school. It should be this simple for all students - to say how we want to be addressed and have it respected.

This bill is also overly broad. It will put an undue burden on teachers who have no way to know the name and sex listed on students birth certificates. It will open the door to litigation being brought by anyone who who overhears a conversation held by students using their affirmed names and pronouns. The government should want our schools to be safe and productive learning environments, and this bill is doing the opposite of that by promoting fear and division.

Thank you all for hearing my story and thoughts on this bill, and I encourage you all to vote no of the passage of SB 76. Thank you.

Lisa Veglahn
lveglahn@hotmail.com
PRIVATE CITIZEN
2/7/2025

OPPONENT

"Chairman Erickson and Members of the Committee, thank you for hearing my testimony on SB 76. My name is Lisa Veglahn and I am a voter in Prairie Village, KS. I am writing today to urge the committee to vote NO on SB 76"

Politicians need to stop this focus on inserting government into classrooms, schools, and the lives of students and families they don't know. This reckless and frankly cruel use of government, attacking such a small minority of the student population, hampers good teachers from doing their jobs and puts Kansas students literally at risk for bullying and suicide.

PLEASE focus on real issues that matter to the lives of Kansans rather than spending time and energy going after teachers and students. Vote no on SB 76. Thank you.

Austin Vawter
arvawter@aol.com
Private Citizen
2/6/2025

Opponent

Chairman Erickson and Members of the Committee, thank you so much for giving me time to share my thoughts on SB 76 with you today. My name is Austin Vawter and I am a voter in Wichita. I am writing today to encourage the committee to vote NO on SB 76

If you are a first amendment purist, you should oppose this bill as it restricts freedom of speech for adults and potentially for children as well.

The first amendment gives us the constitutional right to refer to anyone by any name or pronoun we choose despite their chosen identity.

While yes, this may mean that faculty or other students refuse to acknowledge trans people, it also protects those that do respect their chosen identities.

How we use our speech in matters such as these is constitutionally protected.

The government should not be able to restrict or compel speech which this law aims to do making this an unconstitutional bill.

Thank you for hearing this. Please vote no on SB 76

Garrett Viets
GarrettViets@gmail.com
PRIVATE CITIZEN
2/6/2025

OPPONENT

Chairman Erickson and Members of the Committee, I appreciate your time in reading my thoughts. My name is Garrett Viets; I am a lifelong Kansas who votes in Douglas County, and I am writing today to implore the committee to VOTE NO on SB 76.

We do not need any more pressures pushing Kansas teachers away from our schools. Opening up teachers to being sued simply for calling a student by a nickname when requested is patently ridiculous, and it is transparent that the writers of the bill are focused on making LGBTQ people feel unsafe and unwelcome, not on making schools better. Trans people exist. Trans people have always existed. Trans people will always exist. If you are afraid of children who are different from you, it is your responsibility as an adult to be mature: you should learn, you should grow, and you should let kids be themselves - rather than ostracizing innocent children who don't fit your idea of "normal."

Again, I thank you for taking the time to consider your voting constituents' feelings on this issue. I encourage you to vote against the passage of SB 76. Thank you.

Opponent Testimony of S.B. 76
For the Senate Education Committee
February 10, 2025
Rev. Michael Vollbrecht
United Church of Christ

Chair Erickson and Committee Members,

I am writing as a minister in the United Church of Christ, a lifelong advocate for justice, and a Kansan deeply committed to the well-being of our state's students. I strongly oppose SB 76, which would prohibit the use of students' chosen pronouns without parental permission. This bill is not only unnecessary but actively harmful to the dignity, mental health, and safety of young people in our schools.

At the heart of my faith and my work is a deep commitment to honoring the lived experiences of all people, particularly those whose identities and realities differ from my own. Using a person's correct pronouns is a fundamental act of respect—one that acknowledges their humanity and inherent worth. As a minister, I walk alongside individuals who have been excluded, ignored, or harmed by institutions that fail to affirm their identities. I have witnessed firsthand the pain that results when people are denied this basic dignity. I have also seen the profound impact that love, acceptance, and affirmation can have on a young person's well-being.

This bill would create unnecessary barriers for students who already face immense challenges. We know from extensive research that transgender and nonbinary youth are at significantly higher risk of depression and suicide, and that a key protective factor for them is being in environments where they are respected and affirmed. By forcing educators to disregard students' expressed identities unless explicitly permitted by their parents, SB 76 puts vulnerable students at further risk, particularly those who may not yet have a safe or supportive home in which to disclose their gender identity.

Our schools should be places where every student—no matter who they are—feels seen, valued, and safe. Instead of legislating restrictions on respect, we should be working toward policies that cultivate kindness, understanding, and inclusion. As a person of faith, I believe we are called to care for one another, to honor the dignity of all people, and to extend compassion to those who need it most. I urge you to oppose SB 76 and to stand on the side of justice and love for all of Kansas's young people.

Thank you for your time and for your commitment to the well-being of our students. I hope that you will choose to be an advocate for dignity and inclusion, rather than legislation that denies young people the respect they deserve.

Sincerely,
Rev. Michael Vollbrecht

Colonial Church UCC
Prairie Village, KS

Blair Waite
blairwaite@gmail.com
PRIVATE CITIZEN
2/10/2025

OPPONENT

Chairman Erickson and Members of the Committee, thank you so much for giving me the time to share my thoughts on SB 76 with you today. My name is Blair Waite and I am a voter in Lawrence. I am writing today to encourage the committee to vote NO on SB 76.

I have been a teacher in multiple districts across the state and have seen first hand students that would be harmed by the passing of this bill. I think of one student in particular, though there are so many like him, that needed affirming care. This young man came out as transgender in high school, between his freshman and sophomore years, in a small town. He is the bravest person I have ever met. I saw how the community responded, as he did, and the opposition to him did not come from other students but from adults in the community, it did not affect the other students in any way. This young man did all the right things, attended therapy, got gender affirming care, and is now thriving as a young adult being able to be his true self. Out of all of my students, he is the one I am least worried about in the transition into adulthood, because the people in his life welcomed him with open arms and affirmed him when he told them who he was. For a transgender youth, this makes ALL the difference in the world, as suicide and drug abuse rates are very high within that community. Calling a person by the name they would like to go by does not hurt a single person, but not calling them the name and using the pronouns they wish does harm them. We never know what other people are going through truly, children included, and if something as simple as calling them the name that they prefer to go by saves their life, I will call them whatever they wish. As a teacher, if a student asks me to call them by a nickname, or a different name than what is on the roster, I have always honored their wish and it is none of my business to ask them why. Many people do not go by their given name and for a variety of reasons, so SB 76 is very specifically targeting a minority of students. I also fear that I may be sued for calling a person what they wish to be called as a teacher, all because some community member did not like it. What if it was a student who has a gender-neutral name or a name that we generally think of as being gender specific but isn't in the case of the student and someone who doesn't know them gets the wrong idea? This is a slippery slope and our children and teachers should not be punished for it.

Once again, I thank you all for hearing my story and thoughts on this bill, and I encourage you all to vote no of the passage of SB 76. Thank you.

DiannaWaite
diannawaite@yahoo.com
Private citizen
2/7/2025

Opponent

Chairman Erickson and Members of the Committee thank you for giving me the chance to share my thoughts on SB76 with you today. My name is Dianna Waite and I am a voter in Salina, Saline county. I am writing to encourage you to vote no on SB 76

This is a politicized attack on our teachers and other educational professionals such as professors, councilors, principals, librarians and more.

The damages section in this bill is overly broad and paves the way for litigation based on overhearing conversations. The bill does not require the person who sues for damages to be involved in the conversation at all, which allows for anyone overhearing a conversation to bring litigation.

Even if an education professional wanted to follow this law perfectly, it would be nearly impossible for them to protect themselves from the risk of litigation. There is no effective means of ensuring every school employee and student has the knowledge of every student's name and sex listed on their birth certificate, nor should there be.

The total unenforceability of this bill may lead to excessive administrative burdens on our local schools and higher education institutions, both in creating systems for attempting its enforcement and in costs defending the institutions and its employees against frivolous lawsuits.

Politicians should stop this invasion into classrooms and schools across the state and into the lives of students and families they don't know. This reckless use of government as a bludgeon would undermine the ability of educators to do their jobs and create healthy learning environments.

Once again, I thank you all for hearing my story and thoughts on this bill, and I encourage you all to vote no on the passage of SB 76. Thank you.

Claire Walsh
clairemcody@gmail.com
PRIVATE CITIZEN
2/10/2025

OPPONENT

Chairman Erickson and Members of the Committee, thank you so much for giving me time to share my thoughts on SB 76 with you today. My name is Claire Walsh and I am a voter in Overland Park. I am writing today to encourage the committee to vote NO on SB 7

Hate has never made America great.

Politicians should stop this invasion into classrooms and schools across the state and into the lives of students and families they don't know. This reckless use of government as a bludgeon would undermine the ability of educators to do their jobs and create healthy learning environments.

Once again, I thank you all for hearing my story and thoughts on this bill, and I encourage you all to vote no of the passage of SB 76. Thank you.

Opponent Testimony of SB 76
For the Senate Education Committee
February 10, 2025
Mariah Wambsganss
Private Citizen

I am giving this testimony because SB 76 would cause great harm to the trans citizens of Kansas who need protection from their government not persecution.

Allowing students and staff to use preferred names and pronouns helps to cultivate an environment where individuals feel safe, understood, and heard. Removing the ability to use preferred names and pronouns will sow distrust and hurt among our schools and colleges.

Additionally, the logistics behind SB 76 would be impossible to navigate. Nicknames are one type of a preferred name, which means that schools could be sued for using a nickname for a trans student - even if they don't know that student is trans.

Preferred names and pronouns are important to people - whether they are trans or cis, and SB 76 would do nothing but cause harm to Kansas citizens.

Alysse Ward
alysseward@gmail.com
Private Citizen
2/10/2025

Opponent

Dear Chairman Erickson and Members of the Committee, my name is Alysse Ward and I am reaching out to you about SB 76. I, a voter in Douglas county or specifically Lawrence, would like to urge you to vote NO on SB 76.

I believe this bill infringes on people's personal freedom of speech, freedom of expression and enforces a hostile learning environment. This would increase bullying and general prejudice among students.

Thank you for hearing my thoughts on this bill. I would like to consider the ramifications of SB 76 as I would like to once again encourage you to vote NO for the passage of this bill.

Madison Watson
Educator
Senate Bill 76 Opposition - Written Testimony Only
Senate Committee on Education
Email Address: madison.watson426@gmail.com

February 6th, 2025

Chair Erikson and Senate Committee on Education Members:

My name is Madison Watson, and I am in my third year as a public school teacher. I am incredibly grateful to have begun my career in this beautiful state, and especially within this district. Becoming an art teacher has been a dream of mine for many years, and I am thankful to have the opportunity to help young minds explore their creativity and reach their full potential.

As an art teacher, my classroom has become a place of refuge for students who may not feel safe elsewhere. Many of them are drawn to my class because they know they will find a compassionate, supportive environment where they can express themselves freely. In the short time I've been teaching, I've encountered students who've shared concerns about bullying, suicidal thoughts, and lack of support at home. Several have confided that the only reason they come to school is for the safety and acceptance they feel in my class. It breaks my heart to think that this bill could reduce the support I am able to provide to these vulnerable students. I fear for those who are already struggling to find the strength to attend school—or even to wake up each day.

According to the National Library of Medicine, “82% of transgender individuals have considered suicide, and 40% have attempted it, with suicidality being particularly high among transgender youth” (2020). The report also highlights the significant impact that interpersonal microaggressions and a lack of school belonging have on lifetime suicide rates. These sobering statistics make it clear that this bill cannot be supported. Students who do not feel safe at school cannot learn as effectively as their peers. Every student, regardless of their identity, deserves a fair and respectful education.

I urge those considering the passage of this bill to reflect on the devastating consequences it could have on our youth. The lives of friends, sons, daughters, and future professionals—doctors, lawyers, teachers, senators—are at stake. If this bill is enacted, we risk losing many of them. I hope you will choose to extend empathy and vote against this harmful legislation.

Sincerely,
Madison Watson

Kansas Senators,

I oppose SB 76 as the bill diminishes the humanity of all individuals. According to a June 2022 report from the Williams Institute, 1.6 million Americans ages 13+ identify as transgender (<https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/publications/trans-adults-united-states/>). All humans, including transgender humans, deserve the dignity of being called by their chosen names and chosen pronouns. And their classmates, teachers, and school counselors deserve to call them by their chosen names and pronouns.

When people choose NOT to use the chosen names and pronouns of another person, that is called deadnaming. Please pause for a moment and imagine never being called by your chosen name. Maybe you use your middle name, but others insist on calling you by your first name. Would you find that degrading? Would you feel shamed? Ignored? Seen for who you really are? What if your given name is connected to a person you dislike? Maybe it was a parent who was abusive or neglectful. And now, you must be called by the name that brings up those horrible feelings because a senator in Kansas made it so.

Vote against this is unkind and harmful bill. Please demonstrate love and acceptance of other human beings in your actions. This is my wish, and the wish of the majority of your constituents.

Regards,
Lisa Weeks
Lawrence, KS

Opponent Testimony of SB 76

For the Senate Education Committee

February 10, 2025

Kelly Werther

Private Citizen

Chair Erickson and Members of the Committee:

I am writing to urge you, with a passionate plea, to oppose SB 76 and prevent it from becoming law.

Transgender people are not villains. They are not dangerous or harmful. They are just people. People like each of you on this committee. People with mothers and fathers and friends and coworkers. People with likes and dislikes and hobbies and pastimes. People who go to the movies, eat fast food, watch Netflix on the couch. People who know themselves and who deserve to be called the name and pronouns that best reflect *who they are*.

Weaponizing names and pronouns against students is inherently wrong. Educational environments should provide students with the resources they need to learn and progress. That includes calling them by the name and pronouns with which they identify. It's truly that simple.

Take a moment to imagine yourself in a learning environment – the middle school you attended, perhaps. Can you imagine what it might feel like if Jenni, who uses she/her pronouns, was called upon in class by her teacher like, "Jamie will come to the front now to show his project,"? Or if a boy, he/him pronouns, who goes by Nate is called Nathaniel relentlessly by a professor? These instances can cause the student(s) to experience disorientation, fear, anxiety, shame, and other reactions affecting the nervous system and the students' mental health. In this way, misnaming and misgendering students has a direct negative impact on those students' abilities to be fully present in their learning environments and engage appropriately with curriculum, classmates, and educators. With students' potential for success in education on the line, the consequences of this bill could be far-reaching and devastating to the greater potential of our next generations.

This bill affects all students and faculty in our state's educational environments, not just trans kids. *No one* has the right or the ability to dictate how another person identifies and expresses themselves, and, as such, it is *imperative* that SB 76 be stopped and that no other legislation attempting to dictate human identity may be written, proposed, or passed.

Please, committee: understand that imposing legislature like SB 76 ***directly harms*** real, feeling humans. This bill protects, defends, and helps ***no one***. Allow our Kansas students to feel happy and comfortable in who they are while they attend their jobs as students preparing to contribute to the future of Kansas and our nation.

Thank you.

Testimony in opposition of:

SB 76: An act requiring employees of school districts and postsecondary educational institutions to use the name and pronouns consistent with a student's biological sex and birth certificate

Submitted by:

Parker Whaley

Private Citizen

3715 SW Sena Dr.

Topeka, KS 66604

February 10th, 2025

Dear Chair Erickson and Members of the Education Committee,

Thank you for taking the time to read my written testimony and the opportunity to provide testimony on SB 76. My name is Parker Whaley, I attend Washburn University and am a proud Topeka native. SB 76 would be harmful to not only Transgender students but students all over the state. Throughout all of my years in public schooling, I have known countless folks and friends who go by names that are not on their birth certificate, most of these being cases of going by a nickname, a shortened version of their first name, or even going by their middle or last name.

Trying to take this away from students not only goes against the First Amendment, making this an anti-democracy bill but also strips individualism away from countless students. This is not only your job to protect but uphold. School is supposed to foster a safe, welcoming, and comfortable environment for students. Forcing a name upon someone is something that should remain out of the Statehouse and continue to be in the hands of each and every student.

By supporting this bill, you would damage hundreds of students all over Kansas. So I ask you to please think about the communities you would be causing harm to and oppose this bill. Thank you again for taking the time to read my written testimony.

Sierra Whitted
sierra.taul@gmail.com
PRIVATE CITIZEN
2/10/2025

OPPONENT

Thank you for taking the time to read this testimony. My name is Sierra Whitted and I am a voter in Johnson County/Shawnee, KS. I am writing to ask you to vote NO on SB 76.

We should not penalize teachers for trying to support students as they are figuring things out. It costs nothing for a teacher to address them as they would like to be addressed. It has actually been shown to save lives. This is such a small portion of our state affected that energies should be put towards larger issues that would help more Kansans instead of unfairly targeting teachers just doing their best.

Thank you again for reading and please vote NO on SB 76.

Opposition Testimony for SB 76
For the Senate Education Committee
February 10th, 2025
Molly Wierman (private citizen)

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

My name is Molly Wierman, and I am a registered voter in Sedgwick County. I use she/her pronouns and identify as a cisgender woman. (In other words, my gender identity matches the sex I was assigned at birth: female.) I am testifying today in solidarity with the transgender community, whose basic freedoms are frequently curtailed under the false pretense of “protecting” women like me.

I urge the committee to oppose SB 76 because it severely restricts freedom of speech for employees and students. It imposes undue and unreasonable burdens on educators, who would be required to obtain parental consent simply to use a student’s nickname. Significantly, SB 76 allows any individual who claims to be harmed by the use of a student’s preferred name and pronouns to sue for damages. This provision would undoubtedly create an incentive for bad faith actors—who may have no relation to the school district whatsoever—to surveil students and employees in the hope of observing some infraction to exploit for personal or political gain.

Most of all, I urge the committee to oppose SB 76 because it will cause grave harm to transgender children and students in Kansas. This bill would forcibly out children to their parents, who may (and often do) respond with violence. This bill would allow students and employees to misgender children. It would allow them to deadname children. And ultimately, it would drive a number of these vulnerable children, like so many of their peers, to despair and even to suicide.

It is clear to me, as it should be clear to all of us—there is no freedom of speech, of conscience, of religion, that is worth the life of a child.

Opposition testimony for SB 76
For the Senate Education Committee
February 10, 2025
Eleanor Willson

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

I have lived in Kansas for almost my entire life. A state that I once proudly boasted as my home has become a battleground of partisan ideals that I no longer recognize. Bleeding Kansas was built on the backs of free-staters; settlers who devoted their life and resources to ensuring justice for ALL Americans, including those unlike themselves. The city of Lawrence burned down before backing off of the fight to abolish slavery. Kansas has always been a state of justice and progress, even when our neighbors failed to progress with us.

Senate Bill 76, in effect, allows for the mistreatment of at-risk kids and teens. §1, specifically ¶(c) and (d), permits faculty, staff, and peers to refer to students by their pronouns as assigned at birth, regardless of whether a parent has 'signed off' on their child's identity. Failure to take disciplinary action against individuals who refuse to accept students as they are is, at its core, state-sanctioned violence.

States that passed anti-transgender laws aimed at minors saw suicide attempts by transgender and gender nonconforming teenagers increase by as much as 72% in the following years, a new study by The Trevor Project says.

Passing this bill is almost certain to increase the risk of suicide for trans teens. If you care about the children of Kansas, you will leave this bill behind.

Respectfully,



ELEANOR WILLSON

She/Her

📞 913-998-5033

✉️ EllieW23@ku.edu



SB 76 Opposition Testimony (Oral)
Senate Education Committee
February 10, 2025
Laura Wiltanger, private citizen

Chair Erickson and members of the committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today. My name is Laura Wiltanger. I am a longtime Kansas resident, educated fully in our great state. I am a mom, aunt, and teacher. In my role as a teacher, I have had the pleasure to teach many students who are members of the LGBT community, including nonbinary students. I am also the aunt to a wonderful nonbinary young adult. All of these lived experiences brought me here today to voice my opposition to Senate Bill 76.

This bill turns a local issue into an overly broad state law, stripping educators, families, and local administrators of their ability to create supportive learning environments based on their community's needs. Schools already have practices in place to navigate these discussions with students and families in ways that best serve their individual families. I am so grateful to teach in a district that supported my nonbinary students as they embraced their true selves.

Specifically, with the support of family and community, they have defied the odds. According to the National Institutes of Health, transgender and nonbinary youth have a risk of suicide four times greater than their peers. With the support of family and community, all of my graduated students in the LGBTQ community - including transgender and nonbinary youth - are thriving young adults. I am always so proud to watch my students make their way in the world.

This bill's lack of clarity creates legal and practical concerns for educators. One provision states that public education employees cannot use affirming names and pronouns but fails to specify the contexts in which this prohibition applies. This ambiguity could lead to far-reaching and unintended consequences. For example, if an educator has a child with a non-binary or transgender friend, would they be breaking the law by using affirming names and pronouns at a Girl Scout meeting, a sleepover, or a church event? Without clear stipulations, educators could be unfairly targeted for actions outside of the classroom.

Another critical issue is that the bill protects educators from any accountability for refusing to use affirming names and pronouns but does not clarify whether this applies only to students or extends to colleagues as well. This opens the door for hostile work environments where discrimination could go unchecked, undermining districts' ability to foster professional and inclusive schools for both students and staff. Local school boards and administrators must retain the authority to handle these matters in a way that maintains a respectful and productive educational environment.

Finally, at its core, this bill disregards the responsibility of educators to create spaces where all students feel safe and valued. The well-being of students, including those who are transgender and non-binary, should not be a political issue—it is a human issue. Denying a student the basic dignity of their name and pronouns contributes to alienation, decreased academic performance, and mental health struggles. As an educator, I have dedicated my career to ensuring every student can thrive. This bill makes it harder for me and my colleagues to do just that.

I urge you to oppose Senate Bill 76 and allow local educators, families, and school districts to do the work they are already doing—creating school environments where every student can learn, grow, and succeed. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Laura Wiltanger

Work Cited

Price, Myeshia N., and Amy E. Green. "Association of Gender Identity Acceptance with Fewer Suicide Attempts Among Transgender and Nonbinary Youth." *National Institutes of Health*, 8 February 2023, <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC9991447/>. Accessed 8 February 2025.

Chair Erickson and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide opponent testimony for SB 76.

I am writing today to express my strong opposition to SB 76. As a mother and a member of this community, it breaks my heart that our most vulnerable children are being targeted in this way. This bill does nothing to protect students; instead, it emboldens bullying, strips educators of their ability to create safe learning environments, and sends a cruel message to children who are already at higher risk of harassment and isolation.

At its core, SB 76 is mean-spirited. It prevents teachers from recognizing and affirming students for who they are, even when doing so could be the difference between a child feeling safe or feeling alienated. For many transgender and nonbinary students, being called by their chosen name or pronouns is not just a matter of preference—it is a matter of dignity, mental health, and sometimes even survival. Research has repeatedly shown that when students are affirmed in their identities, they experience lower rates of depression, anxiety, and suicidal ideation. This bill would do the opposite, creating a hostile environment where students feel unseen, unheard, and unsafe.

Beyond the direct harm to students, SB 76 sends a dangerous signal to their peers: that it is acceptable to disregard, disrespect, and diminish the identities of others. This is not just a failure of leadership—it is an active endorsement of bullying. At a time when youth suicide rates and mental health crises are on the rise, we should be doing everything in our power to make schools safer and more inclusive, not creating policies that put children at greater risk.

Schools should be places of learning, growth, and acceptance. Teachers should be empowered to foster respect and kindness in their classrooms, not forced to enforce policies that strip students of their identities. Our children deserve better.

I urge you to reject SB 76 and instead focus on legislation that uplifts and protects all students, ensuring that every child feels valued and supported in their educational journey.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Amanda Winch

Erin Woods
ewoods999@gmail.com
Private Citizen
2/10/2025

OPPONENT

Chairman Erickson and Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to share my opposition to SB 76.

As a parent, I know how important it is for kids to feel like they are valued. This bill singles out an extremely small and vulnerable population of young Kansans and devalues them.

All kids deserve to feel valued at school by their teachers and peers. Kids who feel valued learn better, have better attendance, and form stronger relationships — something we all need.

Teachers understand that to reach kids they have to form a relationship with their student, and that starts by recognizing who students are as individuals. It is harmful to both the teacher and the student to prohibit teachers from creating that trusted student/teacher relationship with this singled out group of kids. Teachers should not be punished for being a good teacher.

This bill also allows trans kids to be bullied without any ramifications or learning opportunities for the perpetrator. Instead of creating an environment in our schools where kids of all backgrounds are accepted and empathy for differences is nurtured, this bill leads to graduates from Kansas schools who are not open to understanding, learning about, or accepting those who are different from themselves.

But most importantly, I shudder to think what it will feel like for these kids to walk down the hallway at school.

Please remember, these are kids. They have feelings and hopes and dreams, just like all kids. Please do not add to the unkindness they are already feeling from so many right now.

Recognize what your actions as legislators are doing...States that passed anti-transgender laws aimed at minors saw suicide attempts by transgender and gender nonconforming teenagers increase by as much as 72% in the following years, a new study by The Trevor Project says.

I continue to worry about this small population of kids that continues to be devalued by the leaders in our state. Please focus on issues that will help Kansans, not issues that serve to harm a mere 1% of our population that is doing nothing to harm others. Please vote no on SB 76. Thank you.