

Lori Greenfield
Elementary Classroom Educator
Written & Oral Testimony – Neutral
Senate Committee on Education
Senate Bill #263
Date: February 27, 2025

Chairperson Erickson and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in a neutral stance to **SB #263**.

I am Lori Greenfield, and my pronouns are she/her. I grew up on a certified Angus family farm near Great Bend, Kansas, which has been in our family for over 100 years. Now, I am the small-town girl who spends her days as a 3rd-grade educator at Prairie Park Elementary in Lawrence. I am not only a veteran elementary classroom educator, but also a coach, counselor, nurse, custodian, reader, detective, comforter, comedian, reporter, author, advocate, researcher, and the list goes on. I've taught everything from Kindergarten to 7th grade and coached both basketball and volleyball. Along with being the Math & Chess Club coach, I also serve as the Garden Coordinator and Club Sponsor at my school. As a proud union member of the Kansas National Education Association (KNEA), I've held leadership roles at local, state, and national levels. Currently, I represent KNEA on the National Education Association's (NEA) Resolution Committee and serve as the KNEA Resolutions Commission Chair. Beyond the classroom, I'm deeply involved in my Lawrence community. I'm a trained storm spotter, a CERT volunteer, and an active member of the Douglas County Emergency Management team. Above all, I am dedicated to serving the students, families, and educators of Kansas. I believe in putting students first and supporting them as they face the daily challenges they bring to our classrooms. Our schools must be safe, welcoming spaces where every student can thrive. I am committed to advocating for both our students and the education profession, ensuring we are all lifelong learners.

Every day, I remind my students that my number one job is to keep them safe and help them learn. When their guardians drop them off at school, they trust me to care for them as if they were my own. This is why I'm a strong advocate for school safety, emergency plans, and regular training and practice – it's essential to ensure that every student is protected and ready to thrive. But school safety isn't just about having plans in place – it's about creating an environment where students feel secure emotionally, as well. I work hard to ensure my classroom is a place where students know they can express themselves, ask questions, and make mistakes without fear. When students feel safe emotionally, they are better able to engage, learn, and grow. It's this balance of physical safety and emotional security that truly allows our students to succeed.

In 2024, KNEA adopted a resolution on school emergency plans that reads:

C-3-14. SCHOOL EMERGENCY PLANS: *Kansas NEA believes in the safety of all students and staff. The Association also believes that schools, school districts, and school transportation systems must have written plans that delineate procedures that include, but are not limited to, emergencies,*

lockdowns, violence, evacuations, and weather-related conditions. Plans must include rapid reaction criteria, timely communication to school staff, and procedures coordinated with on-campus, community, and other appropriate first responders. Emergency plans for each school site must be developed by school personnel and parents/guardians in partnership with the community.

KNEA further believes that for these plans to be effective, they must be practiced and updated on a regular and consistent basis. Adequate training of all school staff is vital to the success of any school emergency plan. Plans must include stress management/counseling strategies as follow-up care for students and staff when appropriate. (adopted 2024)

While I believe this bill includes several aspects that Kansas educators can support, there are also critical elements that need to be addressed. First and foremost, no student should be forced to participate in drills or simulations if they have experienced related trauma. This kind of exposure could re-traumatize them and impede their ability to learn and feel safe at school. Similarly, no school—whether an individual building or an entire district—that has gone through related trauma should be required to participate. Forcing participation in such drills could have harmful effects on both students and staff. Just as students have the right to 'opt out' of a drill or simulation, I firmly believe schools should also have the option to 'opt out' or apply for a waiver from these activities. Ensuring a trauma-informed approach is critical in creating safe and supportive environments for all learners.

I firmly believe that every community should have a comprehensive emergency and safety plan in place, covering everything from weather-related incidents to acts of violence. Our schools are no exception. In addition to having these plans, it's essential that we also teach our students how to respond effectively to various situations. Preparing them through education and practice not only ensures their safety but empowers them to act calmly and confidently when it matters most. Since safety is a top priority for educators, school districts should have the autonomy to decide the most effective way to educate students on emergency and safety plans, tailored to the unique needs of their communities.

We all want to live in a safe, supportive community and take pride in seeing neighborhood kids grow up around us. When emergencies arise, we want to be prepared to support one another. Our schools are no different. Please consider allowing school communities the flexibility to develop detailed plans that best meet their unique needs, or at least provide them with the opportunity to explore various options, especially when they have experienced a traumatic event.