



KANSAS NATIONAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION / 715 SW 10TH AVENUE / TOPEKA, KANSAS 66612-1686

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Director of Government Relations & Legislative Affairs
Oral Testimony – Neutral
Senate Committee on Education
Senate Bill 302
January 15, 2026

Chairperson Erickson, members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit neutral testimony on SB 302.

Kansas NEA is a member-driven organization representing nearly 22,000 educators across Kansas and more than 40,000 education professionals working in our public schools. The positions KNEA brings forward are not developed by staff alone. They are proposed, debated, and ultimately adopted by several hundred educators selected by their peers to serve as delegates to our annual Representative Assembly.

In considering SB 302, KNEA begins with an issue that consistently guides its advocacy: local control. In most cases—and KNEA believes in this case as well—decisions that directly affect students, classrooms, and daily school operations are best made by locally elected school boards working in partnership with their communities and educators. This issue is no different.

Nevertheless, the Legislature is sending a clear signal that it intends to act in this space. For that reason, KNEA believes it is important for educators to be at the table as a resource. In offering neutral testimony, KNEA is not stepping away from its long-standing support for local control. Rather, KNEA is engaging because these decisions will have real, day-to-day consequences in schools, and there is value in helping ensure the outcomes are thoughtful, workable, and grounded in reality.

With that context, KNEA would like to briefly share several concerns from an educator perspective.

Confidentiality

Under SB 302, students must qualify for an exception in order to use a personal device during the school day. In practice, that can require students to disclose learning disabilities or medical needs simply to comply with the law. That puts students and educators in uncomfortable positions and raises real concerns about privacy and dignity.

Family and Caretaker Realities

Some students—particularly older students—carry real responsibilities outside of school, including caring for younger siblings or responding to family emergencies. For those students, limited access to a phone during the day is not about distraction; it is about responsibility, communication, and safety.

Enforcement and Liability

The bill places enforcement squarely on schools but does not clearly define who is responsible. In reality, this responsibility will fall on teachers and school staff, often without clear guidance, legal protection, or consistent administrative support. That creates liability concerns and increases the likelihood of uneven enforcement.

Administrative Follow-Through

Educators have lived experience with policies that appear clear on paper but become inconsistent in practice. When enforcement breaks down, responsibility often shifts back into classrooms, creating unnecessary conflict between educators, students, and families.

Definition of Instructional Time

The definition of instructional time in SB 302 is a significant concern. This is an area where KNEA believes local control should take precedence over a one-size-fits-all approach set in statute. Defining instructional time as the entire school day, including lunch, recess, and passing periods, is far too prescriptive and does not allow districts the flexibility needed to respond to the different needs of their communities. There are already school districts across Kansas with systems in place that are popular, effective, and working, and that reality should be taken into consideration.

Additionally, the two concerns outlined above—student privacy and students serving as caregivers—would be better addressed with a less rigid, one-size-fits-all ban. Allowing local districts to make those determinations would go a long way toward easing these concerns, while also honoring the principle of local control.

Unfunded Mandate

SB 302 also represents an unfunded mandate. Districts will be required to adopt policies, train staff, develop storage solutions, enforce compliance, and report to the state, all without additional funding to support those requirements.

Implementation Timeline

Another significant concern for KNEA is the implementation timeline, with required compliance by September 1, 2026. When complex policy changes are developed and implemented on an accelerated timeline, even when the utmost caution is exercised, unintended consequences are likely to occur. In the case of SB 302, those unintended consequences have a strong potential to fall most heavily on educators, particularly given the enforcement, liability, and administrative challenges already outlined. Additional time and flexibility would allow districts to plan more thoughtfully, engage stakeholders, and avoid preventable issues that ultimately land in classrooms.

In closing, KNEA believes many of these concerns could be mitigated by allowing greater local discretion over implementation and specifics, even within a statewide framework. These comments are offered in good faith, with the hope that the Committee will consider how SB 302 can better balance legislative intent with local governance, professional judgment, and the realities of Kansas classrooms.