

State of Kansas



TY MASTERSON

Senate President

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 419 AND SB 421

SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE – 2/4/26

Chairwoman Erickson and members of the Senate Education Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in strong support of Senate Bills 419 and 421. Together, these bills form a comprehensive framework to safeguard free speech at our K-12 schools and our post-secondary institutions. These bills are not isolated efforts but interconnected pillars in our commitment to fortify the First Amendment by fostering an environment where ideas can flourish without fear of suppression or discrimination.

Last week, the Senate adopted a resolution honoring the legacy of Charlie Kirk by dedicating his birthday to the celebration of free speech in Kansas, every year. These two bills are the next step – by ensuring that we are backing up our words with deeds.

These two bills ensure that the principles of the First Amendment are upheld at every level of education. By addressing free speech protections in a seamless progression from high school to college, we create a continuum that prepares young Kansans to engage thoughtfully in civic discourse throughout their lives.

SB 419 — the Kansas Intellectual Rights and Knowledge (KIRK) Act – applies to postsecondary institutions, mandating that outdoor campus areas be treated as public forums for expressive activities and prohibiting discrimination against students or organizations based on their political or ideological views.

SB 421—the Safeguarding Personal Expression at K-12 Schools Act - extends similar protection to K-12 students, authorizing them and their clubs to engage in protected speech and expression during school hours without undue restriction.

Recognizing that the stifling of voices often begins early in education, both bills empower students with legal recourse against violations. They include civil causes of action and penalties to hold institutions accountable, along with requirements that promote transparency.

Remember, the speech protected under these bills is not any specific group’s speech. Whether it’s faith-based student groups or those like Turning Point USA or progressive organizations on the left, these bills protect all by equipping our educators and administrators with clear guidelines while empowering students to exercise their God-given constitutional rights. I urge the committee to advance both measures and ensure Kansas is forever known as a Free Speech State.