



SB 421 Safeguarding Personal Expression. Opposition Written Only | Testimony  
House Committee on Education  
February 5, 2026  
Dr. Brent Yeager, Superintendent, Olathe Public Schools

Chair Erickson and Members of the Committee:

Olathe Public Schools is appearing in opposition to Senate Bill 421 regarding student personal expression.

Our school system is supportive of student free speech and encourages student interest and engagement in our community and nation. We also adhere to the protections and boundaries of hateful, discriminatory, and other speech that is age appropriate within the context of the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution.

Our opposition stems from two components of the bill. Our first concern is the definition of "harmed" in language that is otherwise very expansive and inclusive. The bill allows a self-determination of harm that is almost without limitations when an individual student or family member believes their space of safety has been violated. The bill could be used to cast too broad of a net and invites unending litigation with possible intent to diminish a voice in opposition to their freedom.

Second, the sanctions included are aggressive and problematic when paired with our first concern. The bill provides that "any student or student club or organization that is harmed" can pursue a private cause of action against the school including damages, legal fees, and "any appropriate relief." And a civil penalty of \$5,000 each. The bill makes the public entity liable for the speech within their walls.

The bill could expand free speech, and it could provide many opportunities for students and organizations to educate each other. We don't want to make a chance to learn also a vehicle for retribution. We believe the existing authority of the locally elected boards of education have the authority and responsibility to address these local issues.

We appreciate the opportunity to testify.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Brent Yeager", is written over a light blue horizontal line.

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