



**Oral Opponent Testimony on
SB 384, innovative district deadlines
Senate Education Committee**

**By
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Madam Chair and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in opposition to SB 384. KASB proudly represents over 330 local boards of education, special education interlocals, community colleges, and technical colleges across Kansas. Our member boards are comprised of more than 2000 locally elected officials who are charged with governing public education in partnership with their communities and the Kansas State Board of Education. Our member-adopted legislative platform and permanent policies affirm that public education is a “cornerstone of American democracy” and that local governance, transparency, and accountability are essential to serving every student well.

Why the Current Law Works

Under current statute, districts seeking “public innovative district” status apply by December 1, and the State Board has 90 days to conduct a thorough, public review. This timeline provides boards the space to plan carefully, engage parents and staff, and answer practical questions about services, budgeting, staffing, and student supports before seeking broad waivers. It also ensures an affirmative, on-the-record decision by the State Board—critical for clarity, accountability, and public trust.

What SB 384 Would Do

SB 384 would:

- Move the application deadline to May 1;
- Cut the State Board’s review window to 30 days; and
- Deem applications approved if the State Board does not act within those 30 days.

These are not minor adjustments. Together, they privilege speed over diligence in decisions that can change a district’s governance, operations, and obligations to students and staff.

Risks to Accountability and Transparency



- Approval by inaction weakens oversight. When silence equals consent, Kansans lose the clear record of who approved what, under which conditions, and how results will be monitored.
- Compressed timelines curtail public notice and input, leaving parents and employees to learn about major changes after decisions are effectively final—especially when approvals default automatically.
- A May 1 submission followed by a June approval leaves little time to responsibly adjust staffing, transportation, special education services, and contracts for the coming school year, increasing disruption for students, staff, and parents.

Impact on Local Democratic Control

Locally elected boards—and the State Board—are the public’s authorizers. Their duty is to affirm flexibility when proposals are complete, fiscally sound, and educationally credible, and to deny or condition requests that are not. SB 384 reorders that responsibility, making it easier to secure broad waivers without an affirmative, public decision—thereby diluting the direct line of accountability from schools to voters.

No Demonstrated Problem with Current Timelines

KASB has conducted years of listening sessions and legislative policy development with member districts. We are unaware of dissatisfaction among local boards with the current application and review timelines. If timeliness were the issue, targeted improvements could be considered without resorting to rushed approval by default.

Furthermore, we must call out what is likely the unspoken agenda behind this bill—a first step in loosening regulations so as to open the door wider in Kansas to a charter school sector that, in other states, has operated without sufficient guardrails and accountability—ultimately harming public education through waste, fraud, abuse, and poor academic outcomes for students.

The Balanced Path Forward

Innovation and accountability are not competing values; they are mutually reinforcing. The existing statutory structure strikes the right balance by supporting innovation while preserving transparency, deliberation, and public trust. If any changes are contemplated, they should maintain affirmative approval, require complete applications before the clock starts, and ensure meaningful public engagement prior to any decision.

For these reasons, KASB respectfully urges a NO” vote on SB 384. Thank you.