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Testimony to the Senate Federal & State Affairs Committee

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BILL NUMBER: SB 314

PROPONENT, OPPONENT, or NEUTRAL: Opponent

ORAL or WRITTEN ONLY TESTIMONY: Written-Only

Chair Thompson and members of the committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in opposition to SB 314.

This bill would prohibit governmental employees and elected officials, such as school board members and superintendents, from advocating for or against constitutional amendments, even when those amendments directly affect public schools. I believe this is a misguided approach that harms transparency, local governance, and informed civic participation.

School leaders are responsible for implementing state policy and managing its real-world consequences. Preventing them from speaking openly about how constitutional amendments impact school funding, staffing, or student services deprives voters of critical, factual information from trusted local experts.

Kansas already has clear laws prohibiting the use of public resources to campaign for candidates. SB 314 goes much further by blurring the line between campaigning and policy advocacy. Educating the public about the effects of proposed constitutional changes is not partisan activity. It is responsible governance.

The broad language in these bills also creates a chilling effect. School leaders may hesitate to answer questions at public meetings, explain budget impacts, or provide context to voters for fear of violating the law. This undermines trust between schools and the communities they serve.

Kansas has long valued local control and open government. This bill moves in the opposite direction by dictating what local officials may say to their own constituents about issues that directly affect their ability to do their jobs.

Voters are best served through transparency, expertise, and open dialogue. SB 314 restricts all three without solving any demonstrated problem.

I respectfully urge the Committee to oppose SB 314 and to protect the ability of local leaders to inform and engage with their communities.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Erin Woods
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