

KANSAS
ASSOCIATION



OF
SCHOOL
BOARDS

1420 Arrowhead Road | Topeka, Kansas | 66604-4024
785-273-3600 | 800-432-2471 | 785-273-7580 FAX
www.kasb.org

Testimony before the
House Committee on Corrections and Juvenile Justice
on
HB 2559 – Relating to Public School Safety

by
Tom Krebs, Governmental Relations Specialist
Kansas Association of School Boards

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Madam Chair, Members of the Committee,


Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony on **HB 2559**. We rise in opposition to almost all of the revised language. Our members have adopted a position opposing new unfunded mandates without either new funding or relief from other requirements. This bill provides neither. The one exception to our opposition is the additional language in Section 1 (b) (1), which broadens the definitions of acts that must be reported to an appropriate state or local law enforcement agency.

The remaining revisions are unfunded mandates that do not make students or employees any safer; it just becomes data collection for the sake of data collection. Schools are already the safest place for a student to be. Demanding administrators be burdened with a mandated daily log for which an employee can be charged with a misdemeanor if not completed actually puts students at more risk. Administrators at the end of the day are inevitably charged with overseeing student activities. Where do parents want those administrators? At the events with students or in the office filing reports?

And what happens if all the *Is* are not dotted and the *Ts* are not crossed? Districts become exposed to more litigation, which further reduces their resources to fund the very staff members that really keep schools safe: counselors, administrators and teachers in adequate numbers to supervise children at school and afterschool events.

The fact the bill suggests a school or safety officer shall be responsible for the logs reflects poor understanding of how schools in our state are staffed: less than 16 percent of our districts have a School Resource Officer (SRO) or a security officer. So for 84 percent of the districts, this record keeping becomes an administrative responsibility. It should also be noted about a third of our buildings have less than 200 students. A building like that may not even have a full-time principal, and it's certainly a possibility the part-time principal may be part time because he or she also serves as the district superintendent, the food service director and maybe that day as a bus driver.

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Many members of the legislature are strong opponents of unfunded mandates handed down from the federal government that appear to make for busy work with no real effect on the problem at hand. This would be one from the state to school districts. The best solution for keeping our children safe at school is to adequately fund them in a way adults can serve as visible, caring and accessible people, which is the real key to reducing anti-social behavior.

Thanks you for the opportunity to provide input.