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Director of Government Relations & Legislative Affairs
Oral Testimony – Opponent
House Committee on Education
House Bill 2709
February 14, 2024

Chairperson Thomas, members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in opposition to HB 2709.

KNEA is extremely concerned about the opioid epidemic that is affecting the nation. Our members have debated and adopted several resolutions that focus on health, safety, and welfare of students. Many of these resolutions speak to substance abuse and addiction.

One of the more direct resolutions states:

Kansas NEA believes that local and state governments should develop, establish, and implement policies to protect school districts, personnel, students and communities from substance addiction and abuse.

In the 2023 Legislative session, Kansas NEA supported HB 2390. This bill would allow the use of fentanyl strips to be used as a resource to prevent overdose and save lives by protecting students, educators, and school staff from potential harm due to the exposure to fentanyl should they encounter an unidentified substance in the school building.

Our concern with HB 2709 is with the legislature directing the state school board to develop statewide standards that already exist. Kansas NEA is also concerned with the legislature directing local school boards to adopt “policies and standard” on issues that should be debated elsewhere. These are actions and decisions that should be left to the Kansas Board of Education and local boards of education. We very much understand the seriousness of this issue and the urgency to respond. The response, however, has to be done using the standards that are already in place and the processes that have been established to ensure that local voices are heard.

We ask the committee to oppose HB 2709.