

**To: Senate Committee on Education**

**From: Cassandra Barton, Head of School for Insight School and Kansas Virtual Academy**

**Date: March 7, 2023**

**Re: Support of HB 2080**

Madame Chairwoman and members of the committee,

Thank you for your time and the opportunity to offer remarks on HB 2080. I am the Head of School for Insight School of Kansas and Kansas Virtual Academy; both are virtual schools authorized by the Spring Hill School District and currently serving many students and families across this great state.

I stand in support of HB 2080, which would authorize students enrolled in a virtual school to take state assessments in a virtual format.

Our virtual students choose virtual schools because they believe this format provides them the best opportunity to learn and be successful. Our students learn their lessons virtually. They take all of their quizzes and exams virtually, whether it is a history or a science test. State assessments, however, are the exception.

Currently, in order for our virtual students to take their state assessments, they are required to go to in-person testing site to take the assessments. These sites are created and facilitated by the virtual school staff. Our virtual schools have students from across the state, meaning some of the students have to travel hours to their nearest site. At these testing sites, the students take the state assessment on a rented computer. The computer has the state assessment software downloaded, which locks down other programs.

HB 2080 provides virtual schools the option to allow virtual students to take their state assessments in their regular format. This is natural request from the students and parents who chose this option. In-person testing is not what is best for our virtual students. It forces our students to face obstacles as they are assessed that are not present for their brick-and-mortar peers: virtual students must test in an unfamiliar setting, they must complete testing in a manner that does not align with how the assessments were designed to be completed, and their family sustains a financial impact due to state assessments.

It is a known best testing practice for students to take assessments in the environment in which they learn material on the subject(s) assessed. Our students do their schooling 100% virtually and are able to choose the physical setting in which they school on a daily basis. Some students school at their kitchen table, some from a dedicated school room in their home, some from a quiet workspace at their parent's workplace. Our students should be able to take their state assessments in their preferred location, where they are comfortable. In-person testing causes our students to have to navigate the distraction of being in a location new to them, with other students and proctors that they may or may not know. This substantial change in setting causes anxiety for many students, which can impede their ability to focus on their assessments and do their best work, leading to inaccurate outcomes.

Due to the logistics of having to gather virtual students at in-person testing sites, our students must complete their assessments in less testing sessions than their brick-and-mortar peers. In brick-and-mortar schools, state assessments can be easily spread out over days and weeks; students may take one assessment per day, or even per week in a brick-and-mortar setting. This approach is not logistically possible for virtual schools and, therefore, virtual students must complete multiple, if not all, of their required state assessments on one day. Doing so is exhausting for students and leads to testing fatigue, which impacts the outcomes for virtual students.

Finally, the in-person testing requirement comes at a financial cost for virtual students' families. The families must provide transportation for the virtual student(s) to and from their testing site. In order to do so, some guardians must take a day off of work, which can mean a day of lost wages in addition to the cost of gas to get a student to their testing site. Depending on the distance to the testing site, the amount of time the student needs to complete the assessments for the day, etc., meals can become an additional expense for the family as well.

While I understand security is a concern, our virtual staff are trained to monitor students online. They do so daily in live sessions with our students, but also have been virtually proctoring our growth assessments (previously NWEA MAP and currently Fastbridge) for years. We have the ability to see students via webcams in live sessions and staff know to watch for behaviors and body language that indicate students may be getting assistance from resources in their home. Furthermore, our students and families are trained on expectations when taking an online, proctored assessment. In addition to our live, trained staff proctoring, the system through which all students take the state assessments (KITE) locks the students' computers down so they are not able to visit any other programs while in the KITE system, providing another layer of security with all students.

The students will be taking the test from their own computer and the same KITE software that will lock down the use of any other program. The bill provides a list of security protocol that must be in place. This protocol is consistent with other major exams are live proctored in today's world, including AP exams and even the LSAT.

Allowing virtual students to be assessed virtually would be best for them. It will allow them to test in a familiar environment in which they are comfortable, reducing distractions, stress, and anxiety, and, in turn, giving students a better opportunity to truly demonstrate their knowledge and produce accurate outcomes.

I respectfully urge you to support HB 2080 and allow virtual students to take virtual state assessments.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'C. Barton', with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

Cassandra Barton