

2/20/15

Dear House Committee and Chair,

I am distressed that I am in a position to once again write a letter in favor of state standards that were adopted five years ago and to oppose HB2292. It seems like there are so many other pressing issues in our state that are more deserving of the time and energy that continues to be exhausted on challenging these standards. I know that in the past, you have upheld the standards and I am asking that you continue to do so.

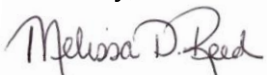
I have been a Kansas educator for 30 years. I am a licensed reading specialist and also have a doctorate in literacy education. I am a parent of two children, as well. Currently, I prepare teachers to teach literacy using the Kansas College and Career Ready Standards. I have also served on state and national committees to write and examine the standards. I have worked with the Kansas College and Career Ready Standards in English Language Arts since 2010 and believe they provide a strong foundation in basic literacy standards for our K-12 children. I would also like to point out that the old version of the standards that this bill proposes that we return to, not only lacks language/grammar skills and speaking/listening skills, they are also poorly structured in the area of writing.

I recently attended one of the "community meetings" led by our interim commissioner and our newly appointed commissioner and listened to what the parents/community/educators were looking for in Kansas education. I heard the skills that people expected a "24-year-old leaving college" to possess and I thought to myself, this is the same philosophy behind the College and Career Ready Standards. I continue to be confused as to the disconnect between the expectation of the standards and those who oppose them, when both groups are looking for the same thing for kids in Kansas.

I have heard the "horror" stories that have spread like the child's game of gossip in social media about the child in tears as they are forced to read a particular book, or that this is an act of communism or socialism. I have heard it is a government take-over. None of these are facts and frankly, I am not sure how to effectively combat the misinformation that exists. Anyone who has actually looked at the standards knows they are the very skills that anyone who is successful in any career possesses. If children are being asked to read a controversial book, then that is the decision that the local school district has made, as there are no reading/writing requirements listed in the College and Career Ready Standards, only a list of outcomes that students should be able to do at the end of a particular grade. If the school district is poorly choosing curriculum, they will continue to do that regardless of the state standards. I believe there is often a misunderstanding of the difference between standards, curriculum, and instructional materials (i.e., textbooks). The three terms are often used synonymously, when they are quite different. HB2292 states that there will be disciplinary actions for teacher/schools who use instructional materials that are related to the Common Core Standards, yet that will prevent teacher/schools from using any effective instructional materials in literacy. There is nothing unique or special about these materials, because the standards do not require a specified book or resource.

I understand you have heard both side of the arguments time and time again. I asked that once again, you will vote to oppose HB2292 and allow the teachers to use student outcomes that will prepare our Kansas children to be college and career ready and prepared to compete in the global society in which they will live.

Sincerely,



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