



Written Testimony in Opposition to HB 2292

House Education Committee

Monday, February 23, 2015

Submitted by Tom Robinett, Vice President of Government Affairs, Overland Park Chamber of Commerce

Chairman Highland and Members of the Education Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony today in opposition to HB 2292 on behalf of the membership of the Overland Park Chamber of Commerce. I will address two primary issues in this testimony: local control and curriculum.

First is the issue of local control. A cornerstone of good governance is that such governance should be as close to the people as possible. This bill strikes at the heart of this belief by usurping the authority of not one, but two locally elected bodies, namely local boards of education and the Kansas State Board of Education. The truth about the current curriculum standards, the Kansas College and Career Ready Standards (Kansas Standards), in place is that they were developed, not by the federal government, but by coalitions of state governments, educators and business leaders across the nation who came together to address the need for our U.S. students to become more globally competitive. Our local districts have adopted and been working towards implementation of these Kansas Standards since the State Board of Education adopted them in 2010. This bill would nullify all of the work and significant financial investment made in good faith by our school districts since 2010 to implement the Kansas Standards.

Second and just as important is the issue of curriculum. Our businesses have for decades placed at the top of the Overland Park Chamber's legislative agenda the priority of quality K-12 education in Kansas. In recent years our members, from global headquarters to small businesses, have further emphasized the need for curriculum that is based in STEM instruction. STEM will give our students opportunities in Science, Technology, Engineering and Math, producing a productive, globally-competitive workforce that will give our Kansas students life-long employment opportunities, and also provide our state with a workforce that will attract top-quality private sector jobs far into the future.

This bill takes a step backwards on that goal, or, at the very least, delays progress for a minimum of two years. It is the expectation of Kansas taxpayers (comprised of parents and the business community) that our Kansas children will receive an education that will prepare them for jobs that do not yet exist. This means they must have technical skills, but also exceptional reading, critical thinking and oral and written communication abilities that will prepare them to nimbly adjust to careers that require lifelong learning. Although the rhetoric surrounding them may not make the standards politically popular, the College and Career Ready Standards and Next Generation Science Standards were developed to prepare our children for just that kind of future.

We respectfully request that as you deliberate on HB 229 you set aside the rhetoric from either side of this debate and look at the learning needed in the classroom to make Kansas competitive globally. This unwarranted step backwards proposed by this bill also represents a tremendous waste of time, money and other resources for our schools districts, the wrong decision particularly at this time when the efficient operation of K-12 schools is under such scrutiny. Thank you for considering opposition of this bill.