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Testimony, HB 2531  
House Education Committee  
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I am writing this letter in opposition to HB 2531. As an educator with 14+ years of experience teaching Chemistry in this state, I understand that this bill comes down to one thing: Do Kansans want teachers that care?

Most educators became teachers not for the money, not for the glory, but because they enjoy the process of transforming lives through education. Great teachers care. They care about their students and the education they receive. Teachers that care are both innovative in their classrooms and fierce advocates for their students outside their classrooms. A system that guarantees due process promotes and protects both of these endeavors.

Anytime a faculty member implements a new research-based method of teaching in their classroom, it is always an experiment at first, and is sometimes not immediately well-received by students. Part of trying something new is learning how to successfully implement it with students. My colleagues and I have found this to be true when we first started using modern teaching methods like team-based learning and flipped classrooms in our courses. Instructors are willing to improve instruction by trying new methods of teaching and taking risks in their courses when they know that they have a reasonable level of job security that supports them through short-term changes. Innovative education requires taking risks. Due process for faculty promotes necessary risk-taking in education. Eliminating due process will stifle creativity and innovation in education.

Teachers serve as the main contact with students. We see them every day in our classrooms and work closely with them as they struggle through material in our courses. We are aware of the special challenges our students face while the institutional decision-makers are more removed from the students we all serve. An important requirement for a healthy educational institution is allowing faculty the ability to advocate for the needs of their students. When administrators are making decisions based on numbers and budgets alone, it is the responsibility of faculty to speak up for the needs of their students and remind them that our students are more than just numbers and tuition dollars. The ability of faculty to advocate effectively for students is protected by the assurance that we can speak freely on behalf of our students without fear of losing our faculty positions if we disagree with the administration. Due process for faculty promotes advocacy for students and faculty involvement in the decision-making process. Eliminating due process will silence the dissenting voices and the quality of our educational institutions will dramatically decline as a result.

This past month, I was a recipient of a Distinguished Service Award from Johnson County Community College where I teach. I was awarded this honor in recognition of both my innovation in the classroom and my leadership outside the classroom. Without the protection of due process, a guarantee that I would not be fired without cause, a guarantee that I can speak on behalf of my students' best interests, and fight for quality education at my institution without fear of retaliation, I would not have been able to take the risks in my classroom or fill the leadership roles on campus and in my community that led me to deserve this award.

Education is not simply a product that a college sells and educational institutions should not be run like businesses. One needs to only look at the failing for-profit schools in our country to see that this is not the way to achieve quality in education. Educational institutions require a balance of internal power and varied viewpoints to achieve excellence. It's not that teachers are so special, it's that education is unique. So, does Kansas want to be competitive in recruiting and keeping faculty at our community colleges that really care? Please support our Kansas community college faculty by defeating this bill and protect the rights of educators at our community colleges so they can continue to innovate, advocate, and lead.

Thanks for your time.