

Testimony against SB 56

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Thank you for listening to my testimony, it is difficult to be there in person to testify when you are teaching.

I became alarmed after reading Senate Bill No56 and the brief about the bill. I believe that it could have far reaching effects on the way we teach about the history of art and cultures.

I am very careful about what I present to elementary students, making sure that it is age appropriate. It is almost impossible to remove every example of art that might fall under the description of nudity put forth in this bill. Even Mona Lisa shows a little cleavage.

One of the best experiences we give to our students is a trip to the Nelson Atkins Museum of Art (ranked the no.1 museum in the country). It is impossible to visit the museum on a school tour without walking past Greek statues of unclothed humans or paintings that may show some form of nudity. Those works of art are not our focus on the elementary level but may be on the high school level.

When I prepare students for the visit, I tell them that we will be walking past the Greek statues. We talk about how the Greeks invented the Olympics and believed the human body was beautiful and they wanted to show that in their sculptures.

I have never had a student or parent complain about our visits, in fact the students talk about how great the museum is. I get to take kids who have never been to an art museum and their reaction is amazement. I had one young man who is not particularly into art tell me he never imagined that the museum could be this great.

SB56 takes away the affirmative defense for teachers to use materials for educational purposes. It appears that I could actually be prosecuted for taking kids to the museum knowing that we are going to be walking by the Greek statues. So do I ask the museum to throw sheets over the statues or cancel our tours? I believe an unintended consequence of this bill is that districts will be afraid to condone trips to the museum knowing that under the description of nudity in this bill they could be prosecuted.

This bill is too broad, is unclear about who would be determining what is harmful to kids and would have far reaching consequences in the way we teach.