

Donnavan Dillon
Private Citizen
Oral Opponent Testimony of HB 2616

Chair and Members of the Committee,

My name is Donnavan Dillon. I was born and raised in Lawrence, Kansas. I am a sophomore at the University of Kansas pursuing a double major in political science and sociology. I graduated from Lawrence High in 2021. I would not be where I am today without the support of our public school system in Kansas which is why I am here to urge you to vote in opposition of Senate Bill 2616.

The first issue I'd like to address is something I think we can all agree on. Outside of the legislature in the public sphere there is a lack of public education during and after the session. Every session a myriad of bills are debated and passed that make what could be significant changes to law and policy that impact people's everyday lives. This on top of legal battles that often ensue leave the public confused on what has stayed, changed, or has been held up in court. As someone who works in and follows the legislature and policy as a student as well as part of my job this can even be confusing for me. We have to think how confusing this can be for the general public who has little to no background or education on the bills and issues that exit this building at the end of every session. In the context of this bill the everchanging and unclear landscape can create instances under this legislation where a school can lose accreditation due to a lack of clarity on where policy stands, especially when policy enters into the courts.

A loss of accreditation is a serious matter that should not be taken lightly. It can have direct effects on the outcomes of students pursuing a higher education as well as a quality education. This decision goes even further than district administration and can impact parents, students, and teachers alike especially when made on such swift and punitive timelines as proposed in the bill. We have to think what the loss of accreditation during someone's high school years could do to their future outcomes? When accreditation can take such a long time to receive, why is it something we are interested in taking away at the first instance of a mistake.

This bill is overly punitive and is a direct attack on public schools. This bill does not apply to private schools however subjects public schools to extremely punitive measures when there is a perfectly good system in place. In our current system there are already guidelines and checks in place through the Kansas Department of Education more specifically the Accreditation Advisory and Review Councils. Switching to a system that is more punitive rather than focuses on schools keeping their accreditation and better understanding state law and its impact on individual districts.

With that I leave you with one question: If the purpose of this bill is to solve the issue of schools not adhering to state guidelines why aren't private schools included as well.

Because of the aforementioned reasons and many more I urge you to vote in opposition of HB 2616,

Donnavan Dillon