

Proponent Written Testimony of **SB427**

For the Senate Education Committee

Senate Education Committee

March 13, 2024

Dr. Janet Neufeld, Graduate School Professor, retired Kansas administrator

Madam Chairwoman and Members of the Committee,

I appreciate this opportunity to present written testimony in support of SB 427.

School boards have become increasingly restrictive and secretive, and the power of a meeting is placed in the sole hands of the board president. The McPherson USD#418 board president closely controls the school board meeting agenda and open discussion. The USD #418 Superintendent and individual board members have stated *what other board members can and cannot say in public*. We need to ensure that taxpayer resources and other topics are allowed to be discussed in a public board meeting by elected officials representing patrons of the school district, regardless of whether a board member agrees with the majority of the board. This power cannot all be given to one board member.

Senate Bill 427 is a great way to ensure that school district patron voices are heard and that public officials communicate in open and recorded sessions with their patrons.

Adding options for the taxpayers to listen to public comments while watching board meetings online is a good thing and may also increase patron attendance. Currently, our board meetings in McPherson USD #418 are held in a very small area and people largely avoid attending, but would rather listen to the online option. School district patrons are becoming increasingly vocal in their communities and their voices should not be stifled by district policy.

SB427 would ensure that school district patrons and taxpayers are legally allowed to be a part of a public school board open meeting and a school board president or superintendent cannot prevent or control that option.

Thank you for this opportunity to encourage your support of SB 427.