

SB 47

Proponent Testimony – in person

March 11, 2025

Hello, my name is Amy Cawvey and I am a sitting school board member at Lansing USD 469. Speaking as an individual and not on behalf of the board, I fully place my support behind Senate bill 47.

School board members need to provide transparency to their constituents. Our district provides email addresses on our website and I believe phone numbers should also be included. I provide mine publicly on my social media pages for constituents to contact me whenever they would like.

I fully support an individual board member being allowed to add items to the meeting agenda. We can not fully represent our constituents and be a voice for them without this. Currently the Board President and superintendent set the agenda, but board president is a parliamentary position to preside over meetings and the superintendent is not an elected official. By denying an individual board member the right to have items added to agenda is denying their ability to fully represent their constituents. I have witnessed this first hand while after requesting items for meeting agenda our sitting board president, Vice-President and superintendent not only did not add a member's agenda request but did not even respond. On followup emails they all again failed to respond. This curtails the ability of a board member to respond to their constituents if they are not in the parliamentary board president position to add these items. This allocates more power as an individual board member to the president of the board which usurps other members ability to lead.

I also believe the authorization of payment for training to any non-profit source providing school board member training is needed. There are many training opportunities both in-state and out to further our education and training to serve. I have personally taken part and paid for some of these trainings out of my own pocket but feel they should be reimbursed. I am better able to serve my constituents because of this training. As you know school board members are not paid so taking these out-of-pocket training expenses and authorizing payment from the district will benefit the school board member, the district and most important the students.

On a local level we have added to our Parents Bill of Rights a guaranteed public comment portion to each agenda. Not every district does this, and some times when a controversial topic is on agenda they withhold that opportunity. This can be handled at a local level as we did, but not every board will do so but every citizen in Kansas should have the opportunity to speak and address their elected officials. This is why I support adding this along with allowing board response to the comment when desired.

I am very proud of our students, staff and district but like other districts our achievement scores have been declining. In math and ELA, we have more students below grade level now than in 2015 and proficiency levels are lower. That is going in the wrong direction. Board members need to be transparent with the public and also retain the ability to bring about policies to promote much needed changes in education. This bill will support that and empower individual school board members to advocate for their constituents. This would also allow constituents to easily contact their board members who have taken an oath to serve.

Thank you
Amy Cawvey

Lansing 469 school board member