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Written Opponent Testimony of HB 2071
For the House Health and Human Services Committee

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Chair Carpenter and members of the Committee,

I write today to oppose the so-called “Help Not Harm” Act, designated HB 2071. The name of the legislation tries to hide the hateful and awful ideas it contains.

I oppose HB 2071 because I am an educator. I am a teacher and a coach. Children who enter my classroom feel safe and free to express themselves. To do otherwise would violate the sacred trust I’ve gained by earning my Bachelor’s degree, my Masters degree, and my Professional Teaching License. My students know that I will protect them from hatred like the hatred encased in this bigoted legislation. They know they can ask for my help with any problems they might have, school-related or not, and that I will do my best to help them or at least connect them with someone who can help them.

I oppose HB 2071 because I am an educator who cares about the children I teach. I do not check my 1st amendment rights at the school building doors and will not take part in spreading hatred to children. I rebuke the legislators who would have me ignore my students' wishes in simple tasks such as using chosen names and pronouns that fit them. Not only is this in violation of basic decency, but it is, at best, a childish thing for the legislature to demand of me; it is, at worst, asking me to break trust. Further, it puts me in a position where I must choose between my teaching license, my very livelihood, and treating children with basic decency, dignity, and respect. This bill is shameful and bigoted.

Three days into my first year of teaching, a student who had no classes with me came into my classroom right after school and asked me if I would sponsor a Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA). I indicated I would sponsor the club but had to ask, “What made you approach me about this? I don’t have you in class, and I haven’t told anyone about my political views or anything.” The student said, “Well, you told everyone in your classes that we’re on a tiny rock, hurtling through space, and we should treat others with kindness and respect, so I figured you’d be a good sponsor.” It occurred to me that if all it took for this kid to choose me as their sponsor, kindness and respect must be in short supply. I learned that day just how important it is to treat the children in our care with basic decency, compassion, and respect. I knew that fostering such in how students treat their peers is essential. Through sponsoring that club, I learned that LGBTQ kids

are no different than their peers. They have all the same challenges and anxieties as any other high school kid, with the bonus of adults in power who will mistreat them. Adults like those who introduced this legislation. Adults in power who will encourage, or at least not intervene when these kids are mistreated and bullied by other kids. Their bullies parrot what they hear from the adults in their lives.

It's hateful legislation like this that pushes good people out of teaching. Kansas is facing a teacher shortage. In the fall of 2024, public school teaching vacancies in Kansas were 1,954, up from 1,810 in the spring of 2024 and 1,628 in the fall of 2022. The district where I teach has about 20% of its teaching positions, more than 70 positions filled by long-term substitute teachers. Forcing teachers to violate the trust of their students will only exacerbate this problem. Violating the 1st Amendment rights of teachers so the hate-filled legislature can show everyone how hateful they are is pathetic.

Oppose this bill. Exercise basic human decency and intelligence to kill this bill in this committee. To do otherwise will only result in trans and non-binary children being targeted by the very people from whom they are supposed to learn because their teacher followed the law. To be ignored and abused by teachers they are supposed to be able to trust because some bigots in Topeka dictated they had to do so. It will teach other children it's ok to treat people terribly because they are "different" or "don't fit in" .."

We must protect our children. Stop another attempt at government overreach into the medical decisions of Kansans and legislators intruding into the private lives of children and parents.—shame on those that support singling out marginalized kids for mistreatment.

Lastly, my classroom will always be a safe and caring learning environment despite discriminatory legislation. I will always be a barrier between hateful people who write legislation like this, and children. I, for one, will not sit idly by while those we've entrusted with leadership choose to abuse our children.