

SB 76 Opposition Testimony (Oral)
Senate Education Committee
February 10, 2025
Angie Powers, private citizen

Chair Erickson and members of the committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today. My name is Angie Powers. I am a lifelong Kansan, a veteran educator, and the mother of a non-binary adult. All of these lived experiences brought me here today to voice my opposition to Senate Bill 76.

This bill turns a local issue into an overly broad state law, stripping educators, families, and local administrators of their ability to create supportive learning environments based on their community's needs. Schools already have practices in place to navigate these discussions with students and families in ways that best serve their individual families. I am thankful that my youngest had educators who treated them the way they wanted to be treated so they could learn at school while my family navigated the journey the best way we knew how. I don't even want to think about how my youngest's school experience would have been if S 76 were law.

This bill's lack of clarity creates legal and practical concerns for educators. One provision states that public education employees cannot use affirming names and pronouns but fails to specify the contexts in which this prohibition applies. This ambiguity could lead to far-reaching and unintended consequences. For example, if an educator has a child with a non-binary or transgender friend, would they be breaking the law by using affirming names and pronouns at a Girl Scouts meeting, a sleepover, or a church event? Without clear stipulations, educators could be unfairly targeted for actions outside of the classroom.

Another critical issue is that the bill protects educators from any accountability for refusing to use affirming names and pronouns but does not clarify whether this applies only to students or extends to colleagues as well. This opens the door for hostile work environments where discrimination could go unchecked, undermining districts' ability to foster professional and inclusive schools for both students and staff. Local school boards and administrators must retain the authority to handle these matters in a way that maintains a respectful and productive educational environment.

Finally, at its core, this bill disregards the responsibility of educators to create spaces where all students feel safe and valued. The well-being of students, including those who are transgender and non-binary, should not be a political issue—it is a human issue. Denying a student the basic dignity of their name and pronouns contributes to alienation, decreased academic performance, and mental health struggles. As an educator, I have dedicated my career to ensuring every student can thrive. This bill makes it harder for me and my colleagues to do just that.

I urge you to oppose Senate Bill 76 and allow local educators, families, and school districts to do the work they are already doing—creating school environments where every student can learn, grow, and succeed. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Angie Powers