

Senate Bill 254 Opposition Testimony (Oral)
Senate Committee on Federal and State Affairs
February 27, 2025
Angie Powers, private citizen

Chairman Thompson and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to speak in opposition to SB 254 today. My name is Angie Powers, and I have been a public school teacher for 25 years. Over the course of my career, I have guided hundreds of students through the college application process—helping them research schools, complete applications, apply for scholarships, and navigate the FAFSA. This work is not just something extra I do; it is a fundamental part of my role as an educator.

I do this because I believe every student who walks into my classroom deserves the opportunity to succeed, regardless of their background. Many of the students I have mentored come from families in which no one has attended college before. These students rely on teachers like me to help them take the next step in their education. I do not ask about legal status—because that is not my job. My job is to educate and support every student, every day.

I have worked with students who have overcome extraordinary challenges. They have balanced rigorous coursework, extracurricular activities, and part-time jobs—all while navigating obstacles that many of their peers will never have to face. They volunteer in their communities, lead student organizations, and dream of careers in medicine, law, and engineering. They are the future community makers, tax payers, and care takers. Yet Senate Bill 254 tells these students that no matter how hard they work, no matter how deeply they contribute to their schools and communities, their dreams are not as valuable as those of their classmates.

Denying in-state tuition to these students does not serve Kansas. It does not make our communities stronger, our workforce more competitive, or our economy more prosperous. What it does is create unnecessary barriers for bright, hardworking students who want to stay here, build careers here, and give back to the place that many of them call home.

I urge you to reject Senate Bill 254. Our students deserve better. Our state deserves better. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Angie Powers
Olathe, KS

SB 63 Opposition Testimony (Written Only)
Senate Committee on Public Health and Welfare
January 28, 2025
Angie Powers, private citizen
angierpowers@gmail.com

Chair Gossage & members of the committee,

Thank you for your work representing Kansas voters in Topeka! I am writing to express my strong opposition to the proposed legislation that seeks to ban gender-affirming care for minors in Kansas (SB 63). My opposition is rooted in my experiences as both a mother of a non-binary child who is now an adult and as an educator with 25 years of experience in Kansas classrooms.

As a mother, I have experienced firsthand the profound importance of having the freedom to make decisions in partnership with medical professionals to best support my child. When my youngest came out as non-binary, my focus as a parent was to ensure their well-being, happiness, and readiness to succeed in school and life. Our journey required thoughtful and private conversations within our family, informed by the expertise of medical professionals and the support of educators. At no point did we need the involvement of legislators in those deeply personal decisions.

As an educator, I have seen how students thrive when they can be themselves and feel supported. When families can work with medical professionals to make decisions tailored to their unique circumstances, students are more likely to come to school ready to learn and engage with their peers. Conversely, policies that strip families of their rights to make such decisions disrupt this process, creating unnecessary stress and hardship for families and, ultimately, for schools and communities.

This bill undermines the fundamental rights of Kansas families to do what is best for their children. It disregards the expertise of medical professionals and the autonomy of parents to provide the care and support their children needs. Such legislation does not strengthen our communities; it divides and harms them.

I urge you to reject SB 63 in the best interest of Kansas families and communities. Families deserve the right to make decisions about their children's health and well-being without government interference. Let us focus on creating a Kansas where all children can thrive, where families are trusted, and where communities are built on compassion and respect.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Angie Powers
Olathe, KS

HB 2071 Opposition Testimony (Written Only)
House Committee on Health and Human Services
January 28, 2025

Angie Powers, private citizen
angierpowers@gmail.com

Chair Carpenter & members of the committee,

Thank you for your work representing Kansas voters in Topeka! I am writing to express my strong opposition to the proposed legislation that seeks to ban gender-affirming care for minors in Kansas (HB 2071). My opposition is rooted in my experiences as both a mother of a non-binary child who is now an adult and as an educator with 25 years of experience in Kansas classrooms.

As a mother, I have experienced firsthand the profound importance of having the freedom to make decisions in partnership with medical professionals to best support my child. When my youngest came out as non-binary, my focus as a parent was to ensure their well-being, happiness, and readiness to succeed in school and life. Our journey required thoughtful and private conversations within our family, informed by the expertise of medical professionals and the support of educators. At no point did we need the involvement of legislators in those deeply personal decisions.

As an educator, I have seen how students thrive when they can be themselves and feel supported. When families can work with medical professionals to make decisions tailored to their unique circumstances, students are more likely to come to school ready to learn and engage with their peers. Conversely, policies that strip families of their rights to make such decisions disrupt this process, creating unnecessary stress and hardship for families and, ultimately, for schools and communities.

This bill undermines the fundamental rights of Kansas families to do what is best for their children. It disregards the expertise of medical professionals and the autonomy of parents to provide the care and support their children needs. Such legislation does not strengthen our communities; it divides and harms them.

I urge you to reject HB 2071 in the best interest of Kansas families and communities. Families deserve the right to make decisions about their children's health and well-being without government interference. Let us focus on creating a Kansas where all children can thrive, where families are trusted, and where communities are built on compassion and respect.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Angie Powers
Olathe, KS

SB 75 Opposition Testimony (Written Only)
Senate Education Committee
January 28, 2025
Angie Powers, private citizen
angierpowers@gmail.com

Chair Erickson and members of the committee,

Thank you for your work representing Kansas voters in Topeka. I am writing to express my strong opposition to Senate Bill 75, based on my experiences as a mother of two Kansas public school graduates and as a public school educator for 25 years.

Our public schools are the cornerstone of Kansas communities, operating under rigorous requirements to serve all students, regardless of background, ability, or circumstance. Unlike private schools, public schools do not pick and choose which students or families they serve. Senate Bill 75 would divert public funds away from these schools, weakening their ability to deliver on the promise of a quality public school for every Kansas child.

Voucher programs, like those in Senate Bill 75, historically fail to benefit families most in need. Private school tuition often exceeds voucher amounts, leaving vouchers accessible primarily to families already planning to send their children to private schools. I respect every family's right to choose the best educational setting for their children, but public funds should not be diverted to subsidize private schools that are not held to the same rules and accountability as public schools.

This bill would be especially harmful to rural communities, where private schools are often nonexistent. Public schools are the backbone of these areas, and reallocating funds to private schools in urban and suburban areas would leave rural schools with fewer resources to serve their students' diverse needs.

As a mom and an educator, I've seen the transformative impact of public schools on both my children and my students. Public schools bring students from all walks of life together to learn, grow, and prepare for the future. They work tirelessly to improve and meet the needs of every child.

If Senate Bill 75 passes, it will weaken neighborhood public schools. Public funds belong in public schools, which serve all students. I urge you to oppose this bill and instead support policies that strengthen Kansas public schools.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Angie Powers

HB 2136 Opposition Testimony (Written Only)
Senate Education Committee
February 5, 2025
Angie Powers, private citizen

Chair Estes and members of the committee,

Thank you for your work representing Kansas voters in Topeka. I am writing to express my strong opposition to HB 2136, based on my experiences as a mother of two Kansas public school graduates and as a public school educator for 25 years.

Our public schools are the cornerstone of Kansas communities, operating under rigorous requirements to serve all students, regardless of background, ability, or circumstance. Unlike private schools, public schools do not pick and choose which students or families they serve. House Bill 2136 would divert public funds away from these schools, weakening their ability to deliver on the promise of a quality public school for every Kansas child.

There is no need to expand the Tax Credit Scholarship program at this time because there are still hundreds of thousands of students still eligible under the current guidelines who are not utilizing the scholarship. I respect every family's right to choose the best educational setting for their children, but public funds should not be diverted to subsidize private schools that are not held to the same rules and accountability as public schools. Furthermore, increasing the credit to 100% and expanding the program will leave fewer spots to at-risk students the program was intended to help. Instead, it allows for tax avoidance for those who already choose to send their children to private schools--schools that can pick and choose who they want to educate.

This bill would be especially harmful to rural communities, where private schools are often rare or online only. Public schools are the backbone of these areas, and reallocating funds to private schools in urban and suburban areas would leave rural schools with fewer resources to serve their students' diverse needs.

As a mom and an educator, I've seen the transformative impact of public schools on both my children and my students. Public schools bring students from all walks of life together to learn, grow, and prepare for the future. They work tirelessly to improve and meet the needs of every child.

If House Bill 2136 passes, it will weaken neighborhood public schools. Public funds belong in public schools, which serve all students. I urge you to oppose this bill and instead support policies that strengthen Kansas public schools, like increasing SPED funding.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely, Angie Powers

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.

This bill's lack of clarity creates legal and practical concerns for educators amidst educator shortage. 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? As written, this bill could open educators up to 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. 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